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MEXICO:

BEFORE AND AFTER THE CONQUEST.

BY

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BY

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PREFACE.

THIS essay was published during the latter portion of the past year in *La Revue des deux Mondes*, and excited in France the liveliest attention. Mr. CHEVALIER, the author, is well known in this country, through which he traveled some years since, winning, by his gentlemanly bearing and high tone of feeling, many friends. In France he occupies a high position in the literary and political world, and is distinguished by the hospitality he has ever extended to Americans.

The translator originally contemplated the publication of only a portion of this essay, intending to omit nearly all of the last half of the second part, but was deterred from this course by the difficulty of doing justice to the author unless his whole argument was given. This book, it is believed, will be found a faithful reflex of the original, and in the present condition of affairs, an amusing contribution to our information about a country in many respects interesting to us.

This essay was written as a feeler to the popular mind, and to awaken it to the great value of Mexico, in a commercial point of view, to France. How far it was successful, the public is well aware, from the great interest taken by the government and *diplomats* of France in our disputes with that country.

MEXICO:

BEFORE AND AFTER THE CONQUEST.

I. EMBARKATION OF CORTEZ.

* On Holy Thursday, in 1519, an armed flotilla anchored between the island of St. Juan de Ulloa and the main land. The men it bore were young, with the exception, perhaps, of two priests of venerable air. The commander was thirty-four years of age. Courage and self-confidence animated the expression of every countenance, and their brows, darkened by the sun, demonstrated that they were not at the beginning of their wanderings. Many of the company, who had sailed by those shores before, explained to others the bearing of the seas, the position of the rivers and mountains, and the characteristics of the natives. No sooner had they disembarked than one of the party, standing by the side of the commander, referring to some detailed description of the soil they stood on, said or rather sang a verse from the old ballad of the Enchanter Montesinos.

“Here is France, oh Montesinos,
There the Darro’s waters run;
Royal Paris lies before us,
And our journey’s end is won.”

Meaning to express that he stood on the shore of a mighty empire.

*The author of this essay thinks it his duty to say here that, independently of his own personal observations in Mexico, and what he has gathered from the older historians of the conquest and subsequent travelers, among whom M. Humboldt is especially worthy of notice, he has made great use of two recent works, the History of the Conquest of Mexico, by Mr. William Prescott of Boston, and the collection of documents relative to the discovery of Mexico by M. Vernaux Compans. This collection, though not yet complete, has already reached the 25th, volume, and contains documents previously unpublished in French, and many others which only existed as manuscripts in Spanish.

Cortez, having landed at Cozumel, and made a brief campaign against the Indians of Tabasco in the peninsula of Yucatan, had sailed to the coast of Mexico on which Grijalva had previously landed, and by some of the companions of whom he was now accompanied. The accounts given by that navigator, the information he had been able to collect in Yucatan, and the vague rumors of the neighboring islands, all confirmed him in the belief that in Mexico he would find a people more industrious than any yet discovered in America, and who were possessed of much gold. When Cortez asked whence came the ornaments of gold many of the first inhabitants he met with on the main land wore, their answer was from Culhua: thus they called Mexico.

Cortez and his companions were under the necessity of distinguishing themselves, by daring exploits. They had committed an offence which could be expiated only by the achievement of fame or the gibbet, for the leaders, and imprisonment for the companions of this enterprise. In flagrant rebellion against orders of the Governor, they had sailed from Cuba. On the faith of the reports of Grijalva, who at different points of the Mexican coast had exchanged beads and other trifles of European manufacture for the beautiful jewelry of the country, Velasquez had organized a formidable expedition, when we consider the colony he governed and the age in which he lived, and had assigned to Cortez the command of it. In this armament Cortez had invested all that he possessed. At sunrise, on the 18th of November, 1518, Cortez, who had been informed that Velasquez, from feelings of jealousy, purposed to supersede him, after conference with his lieutenants, sailed without further leave from St. Jago de Cuba. Velasquez, informed of his intention, arrived thither only in time to see Cortez give the signal, and to hear him ask in bitter irony for his instructions. Thence, to recruit his forces, the bold adventurer had proceeded to other ports of Cuba: Macaca, Trinidad and Havana, followed by the powerless anathemas and useless orders of Velasquez to remain. Everywhere he made additions to the *personel* and *materiel* of his force, and became a rebel, a traitor, and a brigand. He did this with the full knowledge of all of his companions, who consequently became his accomplices. They were brave: many of them were experienced soldiers, having served against the French in Italy, and the Turks on the shores of the Levant. They determined to immortalize themselves, which was not very difficult for Castilians of that age to do; they determined, by their daring exploits, to win pardon for their offences.

Naturally enough, when they set sail, Cortez and his companions

estimated the Mexican races to be as powerless and enervated as the savage tribes of San Domingo and Cuba, who were as indolent as they were inoffensive, and of this prejudice they were not entirely divested by the valor with which their landing at Yucatan had been resisted. They chiefly expected to find gold and treasure; there was an abundance of gold, but as a Spartan chief had said to the Persian monarch, they must *come and take it*. To do this Cortez had six hundred and sixty-three soldiers and sailors, thirteen of whom only had arquebuses, and thirty-two cross-bows, with ten pieces of artillery and four falconets. They had but sixteen horses,* and to collect this small number the greatest difficulties had been undergone. The rest of the armament was on foot armed with swords, pikes or maces; this was the exhibit of the muster made by Cortez at Cape San Antonio, immediately before he sailed from Cuba. Six hundred and sixty-three men set sail to conquer an empire.

And what was this empire?

In their intercourse with the people of Tabasco, all that Cortez and his companions had been able to gather, indicated the existence of a nation in the interior of the continent, of limitless power and opulence, by no means ignorant of the arts of civilization, since its people dwelt in large cities, and rich and highly cultivated plains. The Aztecs (this is the true name of the Mexicans) had extended their empire hundreds of leagues from Tenochtitlan, (now called the City of Mexico,) their capital; they had made conquests of which they retained possession, and spread everywhere the terror of their arms. Their supremacy and laws were submitted to in Guatemala. The name of their Emperor Montezuma inspired the greatest terror and respect. Cortez, in his first interview with Tentilla, governor of the province in which he disembarked, a soldier full of courtesy, a true courtier, remarkable for his tact and *finesse*, having said that he was himself the envoy of a monarch great as the Mexicans' master, saw with what astonishment he received the intelligence of the existence of any king mighty as Montezuma. Some weeks afterwards, Cortez asked him to whom he was vassal. "To whom should I be but Montezuma?" Later still, on his march into the interior, after his battle with the Tlascalans, a chief, whom he had asked if Montezuma was not his sovereign, answered, "Of whom is Montezuma not the sovereign?" An unheard-of luxury surrounded the person of this

* There were few horses then in Cuba. Cortez paid for those he had four hundred and fifty or five hundred *pesos de oro* a piece. According to Prescott, the value of the *peso de oro* is about sixty-four francs; and the value of each beast thirty thousand four hundred francs.

prince. It was etiquette to speak to him with eyes bent on the ground. "I believe," wrote Cortez to Charles V., "that no sultan or infidel prince is served with such luxury or ceremony;" and in the mouth of Cortez the word sultan is one expressing the greatest luxury and splendor.

The words preserved by BERNAL DIAZ, with which the emperor received Cortez, when he gave him audience in his palace in Mexico, showed him what relation the monarch bore to the population of the New World, and what enterprise lay before himself in a contest with countless soldiers and armies. "Your friends of Tlascala have told you, probably," said he, with a smile, "that I am like the gods—that I dwell in a palace of gold, silver and gems. These you see are idle tales; my palace, like the dwellings of other men around, is of wood and stone. My body (uncovering his arm) is like yours, of flesh and bone. I certainly inherited from my fathers an immense empire, vast territories with precious metals, but . . ."

Let us yet look deeply into things; let us see what was the intellectual capital of the Mexican Empire, what moral excellence, what religious culture it had attained.

II. CONDITION OF ART AND SCIENCE IN MEXICO.

POPULATION, the first source of all wealth, was abundant. The general tradition is that Montezuma was lord of thirty vassals, each of whom could put in the field one hundred thousand men. I am disposed to admit that the West sometimes indulged in exaggerations by no means less than those of the East, and I have no more faith in the existence of Montezuma's three million, than of the one million said to have crossed the Hellespont with Xerxes; but every page of the letters of Cortez, and the stories of Bernal Diaz, and the chroniclers give an account of armies of forty or fifty thousand men. Everything goes to show the country to have been much more populous than it now is. We know that a small territory in tropical regions is capable of sustaining a vast population. M. de Humboldt estimates the nutritive power of land planted with bananas* as twenty-five times greater than that of good corn land in Europe. The banana, it is true, is not a product of the table land of the valley of Mexico, growing only in the less elevated districts called now *la tierra caliente*, or *tierra templada*; but on the two declivities of the Pacific and Atlantic, the Aztec Empire was of vast extent, and in

* See *l'Essai Politique sur la Nouvelle Espagne*.

the table land of the valley called *tierra fria*, or the cold country, though fire is unnecessary for comfort at any season of the year, the maize grew, which in tropical climates yields eight hundred grains for one,* and then, as now, in the form of *tortillas*, was the chief article of food. The great cities were very near each other. Around the basin of the lakes in the splendid Anahuac,† more smiling and beautiful then than now,‡ were twenty cities, the memory of whose magnificence is still preserved. Besides the superb capital, rising like Venice from the bosom of the waters, were Tezcuco and Tlacopan, residences of monarchs, Iztapalapan, a fief of the emperor's brother; Chalco, Xochimilco, Xoloc, Culhuacan, Popotla, Tepejacac, Cuitlahuac, Ajotzinco, Teotihuacan, &c., all of them nearly reduced to miserable villages, like the metropolis of Greece, like Thebes and Memphis, happier though than Babylon, Nineveh and Persepolis, whose very site even is forgotten. Mexico had a population of more than three hundred thousand souls. It was much larger than the modern city built by Cortez on the ruins of the first, which now even contains a population of one hundred and fifty thousand. Tezcuco contained one hundred and fifty thousand. Iztapalapan at least sixty thousand. At the base of the declivity of the snowy chain opposite Mexico, was the mercantile and religious capital of Chololan, containing not less than one hundred thousand souls.§

A large population is the index of a certain degree of civilization; wherever men are crowded together, subsistence cannot be had without industry: regular laws must provide for necessary difficulties. To maintain this multitude, measures for the future must be taken, and prudence and preparation indicate some degree of science. The industry of the inhabitants of the table land was remarkable; the

* The average yield of maize in Mexico is one hundred and fifty fold. Eight hundred fold is uncommon, and to be attributed to peculiar locations.

† This is the name yet borne by the vast table land which constitutes a large portion of the actual table land of Mexico. The name signifies near the water, and was applied to the large lakes within its circumference.

‡ Because the Spaniards, to place the city out of all danger of inundation, have nearly dried up the ponds of water, and exposed to the action of the sun a soil impregnated with salt and therefore barren.

§ The road between Tanepantla and Ahuahuetes passes nearly an hour's journey amid the ruins of the ancient city. From it as well as from the ruins between Tacuba and Iztapalapan, we may learn how much Mexico, as rebuilt by Cortez, is smaller than the ancient Tenochtitlan under the reign of the last Montezuma. The enormous size of the market place of Tlatelolco which yet exists, proves the ancient city to have been immense.—(*Essai Politique sur la Nouvelle Espagne*.—Humboldt, vol. ii. p. 43.)

first and earliest of all arts, agriculture, the mother of states, was flourishing. We know not why the soil of Mexico is capable of such a variety of products. In consequence of the gradual elevation of the land from the level of the sea to an immense plain between two and three thousand paces above it, and which is itself the base of mountains covered with eternal snow, beneath the torrid zone it presents in a short space, a succession of all possible climates, from the sea shore with its burning sands, producing indigo, to the sides of Popocatepetl, where, while the glance extends to the *tierra caliente*, the feet press upon lichens and the vegetation of Iceland and Hudson's Bay. The Flora Mexicana is of exceeding richness. With maize and the banana, the Mexicans cultivated cotton, which they knew how to spin and weave. They cultivated the cacao of which a beverage was made that Montezuma delighted in, and which now has become a favorite in Spain and throughout all Europe; we have preserved too the old Aztecan name of *chocolatl*. They were ignorant of coffee and the sugar cane, but sugar they made from the stalk of the maize. They cultivated a vast number of medicinal plants; a shrub of their forests produced the vanilla, with which Mexico still supplies all Europe. From the cactus they produced cochineal, which now is one of the principal articles of Mexican export. Their most curious product was a peculiar kind of aloes, the Mexican *agave*, called by them the *maguey*. It is well known that all nations use some fermented drink,* and to a physiologist, Islamism appears to have achieved wonders in restraining the people of the east from the use of any similar thing. From this fondness, we more correctly may say, from this general necessity of all nations, results the universal prevalence of the cultivation of the vine. The Aztecs had not our vine, which, subsequent to the conquest, imported, has succeeded well in the plains of Anahuac;† but the *maguey* filled its place. As soon as the plant was in flower the juicy shoot was cut off. The saccharine moisture which exuded, was collected in a natural *calix* in the centre of the plant, and having been fermented under the name of *pulque*,

* The fermented drink of the Chinese is made from rice, pretty much as our beer is made from barley. Other nations have fermented the saccharine juice of different plants.

† The cultivation of the vine was the cause or rather the occasion of the Mexican revolution. The Spanish government, thinking only of the interest of the mother country, prohibited the planting of the vine and olive in the colonies. The curate of the small city of Dolores, had planted a few vines and attempted to persuade the Indians to follow his example. The authorities destroyed them; soon after, with the Indians, he took up arms, and was the first general of the war of independence.

was esteemed a delicious drink. The leaves of the *maguey*, bruised and dried in sheets, constituted a species of paper, on which they wrote as the Egyptians did on papyrus; the fibres of these leaves were woven into a coarse cloth, or like hemp spun into rope; the spines which covered the leaves answered as needles and bodkins; the leaves when whole answered as tiles; the root was an agreeable and wholesome food, and, moreover, its pure juice was sweet and well-flavored. The *maguey* answered a thousand different purposes, and was to them a treasure; they never have ceased to cultivate it; pulque is at this moment the favorite drink of the present Mexican nation. The Europeans are the only persons in Mexico who do not use it daily; in the environs of every city, vast squares of *aloes* are seen far finer than any grown in the hot-beds of Europe. This is the *maguey*, whose juices especially please the Mexican palate, and enrich the treasury; it is as extensively used as it was by the Aztecs. Paper is still made of it.* The *maguey* and the *nopal* are the two characteristic plants of Mexico. In the uncultivated portions of the table-land, one sees immense spaces destitute of all trees except these two, either solitary or in small groups, a vegetation melancholy and strange, which remains insensible to the voice of the winds instead of echoing it as it waves in the blast as our forests do, and by its unbending rigidity makes the traveler, when out of the hearing and sight of the hamlets, fancy himself in the heart of a region where some angry spirit has turned all things into stone.

Mexican agriculture knew well the influence of irrigations; canals which have been ruined since the conquest gave fertility to vast districts. Forest-craft was well known and practised; severe laws punished the destruction of trees. The Mexican princes knew the influence of trees in moderating the heat of summer, and in keeping up the supply of moisture so necessary to the regular supply of dews. Inferior in this to their predecessors, the Spaniards introduced into Mexico that horror of trees they derive perhaps from the shepherds from whom they are sprung, and which at this day makes the plains of Castile the most mournful of all regions. Now there is a scarcity in Mexico of wood for the use of mines of silver, which are the richest known to exist, and the mind of man has been forced to provide a substitute for it, in the extraction of the mineral by cold instead of heat, by the intervention of mercury, salt, lime, and another mineral ingredient called in the language of Mexico *magistral*.

If Mexican agriculture was rich in vegetable products, in animal

* Mr. Prescott speaks of two factories of paper from the *maguey*.

life it was very impoverished. Mexico had no beasts of burden;* it had neither the ox, the ass, the horse or the camel, and this is a positive proof that the Mexicans could have had only accidental intercourse with the Eastern Continent, and that they were not emigrants from Asia. We may draw a similar conclusion from their ignorance of silk which is so important a part of the productions of China. The Mexicans had not even the alpaca of Peru.† They were ignorant of the sheep and the goat. It is easy to understand what a *lucuna* must have been created by the absence of quadrupeds in civilization. It is possible to do without the sheep, it is more easy to dispense with the goat, but when the beasts of burden are absent man must occupy their places. In these circumstances the mass of men must lead a servile existence; all burdens then, among the Aztecs, were carried by men; chiefs were carried in litters by bearers (*tamames*). In a similar manner, in China, when we pass out of the great valleys of the rivers or far from canals, transportation is on the backs of men. It is so in Mexico no longer. Mules for general transportation, and asses for the business of towns, have freed man from this painful labor, which at the same time is so humiliating. In mountainous districts alone, the painful task of bearing burdens even of wood is perpetuated.‡

For the transmission of intelligence and of orders, Montezuma had relays of men organized to accomplish what he required, with a speed equal almost to that of our mails. By means of these carriers it was possible to serve at his table fish, which on the preceding evening swam in the Gulf of Mexico. Now in Mexico horses are plenty, and there is over the same route a carriage road, but no one thinks of such a luxury.

As if in gratitude to that nature which had been to them so prodigal of the products of the vegetable kingdom, the Aztecs were passionately devoted to the cultivation of flowers. In the splendid gardens they collected at great expense the perfumed and glittering flowers which a tropical sun evoked in the depths of every wood and on the banks of every river. Mingled with them were medicinal

* The Aztecs appear to have been unacquainted with the buffalo or the mountain sheep and goat of California.

† The Aztecs were acquainted with a species of silk-worm, different however from that of China. The manufacture of cloth from it was small, and so inconsiderable that some have doubted if it ever existed, so that, as a substantial fact, the words of the text may be considered true.

‡ According to Humboldt, the ordinary load of a man is about thirty or forty pounds.

plants systematically arranged; shrubs remarkable from their flowers or foliage, for the excellence of their fruit or virtue of their seed, and majestic and elegant trees. They took especial pleasure in the distribution of parterres and groups of trees on the declivity of the hills, which were so frequent in their country. In this they equaled the famous hanging-gardens of Semiramis, which we of modern days now receive as one of the wonders of the world; to them they conducted aqueducts supplied with water from a great distance, which they diffused in cascades and in basins filled with fish of the rarest kinds. Mysterious pavilions were concealed under the shade of a dense foliage, where were statues in the midst of labyrinths of flowery paths. All the curiosities collected in our botanical gardens; birds of rich and variegated plumage, were confined in cages large as houses, wild animals and hundreds of the graceful and beautiful portion of the animal creation, ran free in delightful parks and *bosquets*. At this epoch Europe had no botanical gardens. When we read the history of the conquest we are struck with admiration at the splendor of the garden of Nezahualcoyotl at Tezcotzinco (two leagues from Tezcuco), hanging on the sides of a hill five hundred and twenty paces high, and which hung over a basin into which water constantly fell from vases held by gigantic statues. The description of the gardens of Cuitlahua, brother of the emperor, and his ephemeral successor, strike us in a similar manner. These gardens were at his residence of Iztapalapan. Of a similar character were those of a cacique at Huaxtepec, not less than two leagues in circumference according to the account of Cortez. We are astonished at all that had been collected by Montezuma in his own at Mexico; and now the traveler who wanders beneath the shade of the gigantic cypresses of Chapoltepec, called Montezuma's, but in fact older than his era, becomes satisfied of the truth of the superstition, that a soil hallowed by the graves of monarchs cannot be subdued, and is satisfied that the Aztec emperor accomplished all tradition says he did, on the plain which surrounds this hill of porphyry, in assisting the action of a tropical sun by the pure water which drips from the bosom of the rock; he esteems reasonable the work now ridiculed as the folly of the young Viceroy Galvez, who built a superb castle already ruined on the summit of the mount, to be able to enjoy the prospect of the superb landscape spread around it. The humblest individuals partook of the taste for flowers. When Cortez, after his debarkation and the foundation of the city Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, made his entry into the city of Cempoalla, the natives came to meet him, and men and women without fear mingled with soldiers, bearing bouquets and garlands of flowers with which they

decked the necks of his horse and hung around his helmet in blooming chaplets.

Another curiosity which makes the name of the Aztecs almost *Idyllic*, and diffuses over their story the influence of an innocence, smiling as that of the shepherds of Arcadia, was the existence of *chinanpas*, or floating gardens on the bosom of their lakes. Masses of lilies or of bulbous plants, doubtless inspired them with the idea of this, when, like the Jews under the stern law of a gentile Pharaoh, they prepared themselves for their future destiny. Soil was measured out to them, as the Bible says straw was to the Israelites. They added to it by binding together on the surface of the lake, masses of roots and ozers, over which a layer of earth was spread. This was done as long as the Aztecs were free. The artificial islands of fifty or one hundred paces in length, were devoted to the cultivation of vegetables and flowers for the market of the capital. Some were of a soil sufficiently firm to support shrubs of considerable size, and occasionally even huts of slight materials. They were fastened by cables to the shore, wherever whim dictated, or they were drawn along by the same means. This spectacle very much astonished the Spaniards, and made them almost fancy, says Bernal Diaz, that they had been transported to some enchanted clime, like that described in *Amadis of Gaul*, a popular romance of their era.

The condition of art and design among them was satisfactory. They produced not only the necessities of life, but its luxuries. Cotton and the fibres of the aloes supplied them with clothing; of the first of these they made even a species of armor which was arrow-proof. They knew how to dye cloths in a great number of mineral and vegetable colors. I have mentioned already cochineal, which is, to speak exactly, an animal substance. They manufactured crockery for domestic purposes, and made also utensils of varnished wood, like the Russians of our own times. They were unacquainted with iron; this useful metal, on neither of the continents, was discovered until civilization was assured. But resembling in this the early Greeks and Egyptians, they substituted for it brass, which much beaten becomes exceedingly hard.* They also substituted for it a volcanic mineral substance, like glass, but harder, now called obsidian, by them *iztli*. They had the art of fashioning obsidian into edged tools; they made of it knives, razors, (for though not as bearded as we, they still had beards,) arrow and pike-heads. They paid great attention to their mines, from which they extracted lead, brass,

* The use of bronze as a substitute for steel is proved, by the ruins of Pompeii, to have been common in antiquity.

silver and gold. They excelled in working in precious metals. The ornaments and vases of gold and silver which Cortez received from Montezuma, before he ascended into the table-land, were cast, soldered, chased, and enriched with highly-polished gems, and with enameling then unknown to the goldsmiths of Europe, who acknowledged their inferiority, if we may credit the cotemporary historians of the conquest. "No prince in the world," wrote Cortez to Charles V., "possesses jewels so valuable," and he declared their fashion not inferior to their value.*

It may be said of Mexico, as of all aristocratic and despotic governments, where the pleasures of the few are the result of the labors of the many, and where the maxim *humanum paucis vivit genus* is rigidly applied. Civilization had the superfluous in excess, and often was deficient in the necessary. The same reflection presents itself naturally to the mind relative to another art practised by the Mexicans with great success, that of the manufacture of *plumaje*, or cloth of feathers. The country, like all tropical climates, abounded with magnificent birds, whose feathers artistically joined to a cotton roof, and occasionally to the skins of animals, constituted a tissue of the richest and most variegated colors, in the most perfect taste, which was appropriated to the apparel of the rich and the drapery of their temples. This manufacture occupied a large portion of the working classes, and of all their productions awakened in Europe the greatest attention.

For the battle-field, a Mexican leader hung over his cuirass of gold a mantelet of *plumaje*. He wore a casque of wood, leather, or it might be of silver, over which hung the angry head of some animal, which served as the crest of his family, with a plume of many colors. His wrists were adorned with bracelets, and a necklace of gold and gems hung over his chest. Many of them bore bucklers richly engraved, and also ornamented with feathers. His arms were arrows, the sling, javelin, pike and *maquahuitl*, a kind of two-handed sword, like the weapons of the middle ages, about a yard in length, with two edges of *obsidian* fixed in a bar of wood. Often the points of the arrows and pikes were of copper. When the European first found himself in the presence of such enemies, his ideas were that he would win no easy victory. Such was Cortez's idea when he found himself opposed to the Tlasteques, though that people were less

* Cortez, in his letters to Charles V., protests that he exaggerates nothing, and his letters bear the impress of truth. Besides, he sent specimens of their jewelers' work to the emperor. Las Casas, Oviedo and Peter Martyr confirm his account.

polished and less luxurious than the Mexicans, at the same time that their arms were inferior, though their valor was not.

Their architecture was monumental in its character. The Mexican soil furnished different rocks of volcanic origin, amygdaloid lavas of extreme hardness. The *tetzontli*, the most commonly employed of all in Mexico, is porous and consequently comparatively light, which renders it very handy for building purposes, at the same time that its consistence is hard and unalterable. For sculpture, to which they paid great attention, they had black porphyries.

Their palaces were spacious, generally of a single floor, and composed of many separate *corps de logis* distributed in a vast circumference, very much as is now done in China. We have good reason to think that an apprehension of earthquakes, which are frequent in Mexico, though not violent, was the cause of this, though the present inhabitants of that country, by means of tolerably firm foundations, have been able to erect edifices of a very considerable height. The *Aztecs* ornamented their palaces with odoriferous woods elaborately carved. The exterior was of a white and solid stucco, which made them glitter in the sun, so that when the Spaniards saw for the first time a Mexican city (Cempoalla), the cavalry of the advanced guard returned at speed to say that the houses were plated with silver. The interior apartments were ornamented with marble and porphyry or hung with *plumaje*. The temples were vast pyramids of sun-burned brick, or of earth with a pavement of stone surmounted by sanctuaries and towers in which were statues of their gods. Above all, burned day and night fires which in the darkness of a tropical night gave to their cities a mysterious and imposing appearance. The immensity of temples and palaces, the enormous labor required for their construction of the mighty edifices crowded in the vale of Mexico, among which we must include the bridges of masonry thrown over the lake, drew exclamations of admiration from the *conquistadores* and their general, who in the main were not easily moved. When Cortez, in his reports to Charles V., mentioned the city of Iztapalapan, which he marched through on his way to the metropolis, he said that it contained palaces equal to the most beautiful in Spain. With regard to Mexico, after the obstinate defence of Guatimozin had forced him to demolish it house by house, he tells the emperor that he did it with the greatest sorrow, because *nothing equal to it remains in the world*.

The mechanic arts in Mexico were in their infancy, but in this respect the most cultivated nations of antiquity had made no greater advance. Yet the Mexicans had been able to move masses almost

as vast in fact as those moved by the Egyptians. Of this kind was the vast stone of the zodiac now imbedded in the walls of the cathedral of Mexico, estimated by Prescott as weighing about fifty thousand pounds, which they had transported many leagues.

A monk who arrived immediately after the conquest, and to whom we are indebted for one of the best books on their civilization, thus speaks of the industry of the Mexicans:

“In general, they were ignorant of nothing that had reference to the labors of the fields or work in the city. One Indian never has recourse to another to build a house, or to procure for it the needful materials. Wherever they may be, they know where to find building materials of every kind, fuel, etc. The very children know the names and characteristics of animals, trees, grasses, herbs, and countless roots on which they subsist. All know how to work in stone, to build a house, to make a rope, and to procure the rough material. They are masters of all trades which do not require great labor or very delicate tools. When overtaken by night in the fields, they build huts in a few minutes, especially when they accompany their chiefs or Spaniards; on which occasions all persons, whoever they may be, set to work with great good will.”

The variety of Mexican manufactures is certified by descriptions preserved in many accounts, of the market of Mexico, which was held every fifth day in a square surrounded by porticoes, which Cortez says was twice as large as the city of Salamanca, and in which sixty thousand persons could be accommodated with ease. The order which governed this multitude and presided over its transactions, the rapidity with which magistrates appointed for the purpose decided all disputes and punished infractions of good order, are proofs not to be contradicted of the civilization to which the people had attained.

Their system of oral and written numeration was very simple. To speak only of the latter, it was estimated by twenty instead of ten, which basis was expressed by a flag. The basis of the system was then divisible not only by the number five, to which all nations appear to have a predilection from the fact that it is the number of the fingers, but by four which contains a farther division by two. It is well known that the weak side of our decimal system is the indivisibility of its base, ten by four. Their signs represented what in arithmetical language are called the successive powers of 20, that is to say, 20 times 20, or 400, which was expressed by a feather of 20 times 400, or 8000, which was denoted by a purse; and they had rarely occasion to go beyond the third power, the sign of which they combined with other figures. The effect of this is precisely what would be the expression by peculiar characters among us of ten, an hundred and a thousand. From one to twenty the numbers were expressed by writing a point for every unit. This arithmetical writ-

ing—though inferior to our own, derived from the Hindoos through the Arabs—is at the least as good as that of the Greeks and Romans; and resembles it exceedingly, for the principal Roman figures correspond to the successive powers of ten. The signs of 20, 400, 8000, were broken into fractions of fourths, to indicate without great complication all numbers. Thus 200 was expressed by a half of a feather, 6000 by three-fourths of a purse.

I have spoken of the manuscripts of the Mexicans; they had a system of writing; they had even more than one. They used not only hieroglyphics, figurative as well as symbolic, but also, like the Egyptians, phonetic characters, expressing not things, ideas or actions, but sounds. From the last to the alphabet there is but a single step; or rather, phonetic systems are alphabets; but they made use of this precious discovery even less than the Egyptians, and limited themselves always within the circle of figurative or symbolic characters. The consequence was, that writing required greatly to be assisted by the memory; their books, in leaves like ours, and not in *rouleaux*, like those of antiquity, were preserved in libraries, almost all of which have been burned. The first Archbishop of Mexico, a man otherwise deserving of great praise, from the earnestness with which he sought to protect the Indians from the rapacity of the colonists who came like birds of prey to devour the fruits of the conquest, collected all the manuscripts upon which he could lay his hands, and made of them in the grand plaza of Mexico a solemn *auto da fé*. The cotemporary authors say they were mountain-like in height, and every one seemed to think imitation of this sad example was an evidence of religious zeal.

The condition of their astronomical knowledge would denote means of observation and methods of appreciation of surprising exactness. They knew the length of the year better than the Romans of the age of Cesar, better than Europe in the era of Charles V. and Francis I.: their method of intercalation to keep account of the fraction of a day, which enters into the exact duration of a tropical year, was nearly equal in excellence to that established by the Gregorian reform; by the latter there is an intercalation of twenty-four days in one hundred years. The Aztecs intercalated twenty-five days in an hundred and four years. The difference is exceedingly small. The length of the tropical year is three hundred and sixty-five days and a fraction represented by five hours forty-eight minutes forty-nine seconds. This fractional increase of nearly a quarter of a day a year, rendering necessary the intercalation of a whole day, or of a number of days, after the lapse of four or more years, was, in the

calendar of Julius Cesar, supposed to be exactly a quarter of a day; so that, in the time of Pope Gregory, the world was more than ten days in advance of the true reckoning. The Gregorian reform, decreed in 1582, intercalates a day in every fourth year, except in the secular years, when a day is intercalated only three times out of four, and supposes this fraction to be five hours forty-nine minutes and twelve seconds. The mean year of the Gregorian calendar is then too long by twenty-three seconds, or by one day in four thousand years. The Mexicans computed this fraction in the mean year at five hours forty-six minutes and nine seconds. Their mean year was, therefore, precisely that of the celebrated astronomers of the Calif Almamon.

LA PLACE, astonished by the approximation of the Mexicans, wished to attribute to them some communication with the continent of Asia, but he was arrested by a very judicious reflection.

“Why, said he, if this exact determination of the length of the year has been transmitted to them from the north of Asia, have they a division of time altogether so different from that in use in the Old World?”

It is better then to believe that this estimate of time was the work of the Mexican people themselves.

This computation of time was not among them a barren or isolated fact, for according to it the return of the seasons and their festivals was rigorously calculated. This is another reason why we should attribute to them the credit of the discovery.

By the side of these remarkable proofs of intellectual power and civilization, we find art in its infancy. For money they used grains of cacao of a known number in sacks, or gold dust of uncertain quantity in the barrels of quills, or bits of other metal in the form of a T. Skillful as they were in the working of metals, they knew not how to coin or strike it of an exact and certain weight and purity. We are even told that they had no computation of weight, which we can by no means conceive of or admit, though Mr. Prescott seems to consider it as probable enough. One thing, however, appears certain, in the Mexican markets, everything was measured by volume or by number of pieces. So Cortez reports to Charles V., but he takes good care not to say that the people were without the idea of weight.

III.—LITERATURE OF THE MEXICANS.

I SAID that the Mexicans had books. They had a literature of history and poetry. They made verses and composed songs and

odes. The city of Tezcuco, the flourishing capital of the *Acolhus*, became celebrated for its love of letters. There was spoken the most cultivated and refined of the dialects of Anahuac. According to Mr. Prescott it was the Athens of the New World. From all Mexico, the most distinguished families sent their sons thither to be educated, as Boturini says, to learn the delicacies of language, poetry, moral philosophy, theology, astronomy, medicine and history. This literary and scientific movement assumed great activity under the reign of Nezahualcoyotl, a celebrated prince, who just one century before the conquest, regained the throne of his fathers, which an usurper had taken possession of. Under the style of the musical council, he created an academy, which mingled with occupation as *littérateurs*, administrative and political functions. It was a *corps*, devoted to the muses we may say, and the preserver of traditions and good taste, and a protector of youthful talent. On certain fixed days authors came before it to recite their poems, and receive premiums awarded them. The three Mexican monarchs, Kings of Tezcuco, of Tenochtitlan (Mexico), and of Tlacopan, (the three mountains, to use the ordinary expression of the Spanish historians,) were members of this academy, and participated in its labors as Napoleon did in those of the Institute. They were proud to have, as their associates in this capacity, the most highly educated men of the country of which they were natives. As a council of censure, this assembly was called upon to decide on works of astronomy, history, chronology and science generally, before they were put in circulation; but its action was not restricted to means of prevention, for it appears that often authors were punished; and this furnishes an example of the penal code of the nation: an historical falsehood, committed with premeditation, was visited with capital punishment. It was a general council of public instruction, decreeing to professors honorary diplomas, and watching over the studies of their pupils.

King NEZAHUALCOYOTL did not disdain to place himself among the poets who presented themselves to this academy. He cultivated the arts with more discernment and greatness than Nero, or than Louis XIV., who appeared in ballets even with pretence of being *nec pluribus impar*, and who is said never to have committed literary *petitesses*, and not to have had any jealousy of his rivals, or to have become so angry with critics as to send them to places of punishment. He bears a strong resemblance to two great princes of the East, King David and the Calif Haroun al Raschid; like the first, he exalted a monarchy which was crumbling to ruin; like the second, his taste was exquisite, and he exhibited a rare magnificence in all

his architectural designs. Like both of them, he was a legislator, and organized a complete system of administration, of which he was the center. He administered the government with real intelligence and success, so that in all his territory there remained scarcely any uncultivated land. Like the Calif of Bagdad he loved to assume disguises, and pass through his capital with his Mesrour and Giafar, mingling with crowds to learn what they thought of his government, and seeking adventures which might afford him a means of exhibiting his good qualities. We find in the history of his life an episode, which seems formed on the story of the love of David for Bathsheba, the wife of the unfortunate Uriah. His odes, some of which have been preserved, are certainly not equal to the Psalms of David, and it is of course impossible to form a correct opinion from translations, which were perhaps extremely loose; but their substance is remarkable. They are instinct with philosophy of a melancholy and tender character, and full of confidence in another life. His maxims, collected from many sources, and handed down to us with many details of his life by an Indian directly descended from him, IXTLIXOCHITL, who wrote in Spanish, are of rare beauty. From his religious ideas one might almost fancy him to have had direct intercourse with Plato or St. Paul. After regaining the throne of his fathers, he published a general amnesty by these words,

“A king punishes, but does not revenge.”

We might almost fancy that we heard Louis XII. saying that the king does not revenge offence offered to the Duke of Orleans. He it was who built a magnificent temple with this inscription on the altar, which recalls to our mind that on the Hill of Mars, so brilliantly illustrated by St. Paul :

“To the unknown God, the cause of causes.”

To enable us to judge of the character of his poetry, the following is an extract, though without the peculiar color of language and rhythm, of one of his odes :

“The fleeting pomps of this world are like green willows, which, when they arrive at an advanced age, are consumed by fire. The axe destroys their roots, the storm prostrates *them*, age and decrepitude overcome and render us miserable.

“All things on earth are destined to perish. In the fullness of splendor, in the midst of the drunkenness of joy, a pitiless weakness seizes them, and they crumble to the dust.

“The earth is a sepulchre. All that lives and exalts itself above the surface must return again under the earth. Rivers, torrents, and mountain springs descend, but return no more to the pleasant spots of their birth. They hasten as if the time were fixed for them to precipitate themselves

into the bosom of Tholuca, (the god of the sea.) What was yesterday exists not to-day, and who can say that what exists to-day may be found to-morrow?

“The dust of the sepulchres were once bodies animated by the living souls of men who sat on thrones, presided over councils, led armies to victory, subjected empires, and decreed to themselves homage and human adoration. They were filled with pride and gorged with a desire to rule.

“But all their glories are dissipated like the threatening smoke which rushes from Popocatepetl; and all that remains of the most glorious life is reduced to a small fragment of parchment on which the chronicler traces a few lines.”

Afterwards follows a strophe in which the royal legislator and poet seems inspired at once with the words which dictated to Juvenal the noble verses beginning—

Expende Annibalem, quot libras in duce summo,

and the words addressed to the faithful on every Ash-Wednesday by the Christian priest when he makes the sign of the cross.*

“Alas, did I conduct you into the obscure pathways of the Pantheon, and asked you where are the bones of the mighty king who first ruled over the Toltecs, and those of Necaxecmitl, the pious adorer of the gods; did I ask you to tell me where are the remains of the Empress XIUHTZAL of incomparable beauty! If I told you to point out the holy ashes of our first father XOLOTL, those of the magnificent NOPALTZIN, and the generous TLOTZIN, and even those yet warm of my father, in spite of his misfortunes glorious and immortal; did I question you in a similar manner about all of my ancestors, illustrious as they were, what could you answer but *indipohdi, indipohdi*, I know not, I know not, for the first and the last have alike mingled again in the earth; and as it is with them, one day will it be with us, and those who come after us.”

With these consoling words the royal poet ends:

“But let us remain full of confidence and courage, noble chiefs, and ye faithful friends, also my loyal subjects. Let us aspire to heaven where all is eternal, and everything defies corruption. The tomb with its horrors is the cradle of the sun, and the melancholy shades of death are the starry homes of dazzling light.”†

IV. ON THEIR POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONSTITUTION.

THE Mexican empire was a federation of three kingdoms, formed by the forced or acquiescent union of tribes of the family of the Nahnatlacs;

* Mr. Vernaux has published the Otomite text opposite to the translation of the Spanish version of Granados y Galvez. He has published another ode called the Lamentation, in Spanish and in French.

† The obscurity of this passage must be attributed to the fact that a mystical meaning in it refers to the ideas of the Mexicans relative to the future state. Paradise, they thought, was among the stars.

these were the kingdom of the Aztecs, whose capital we have said was at Tenochtitlan (Mexico), that of the Acolhues or Tezcucans, whose king resided at Tezcuco, on the other side of the lake, and the smaller kingdom of Tlacopan (Tacuba). At first, these three kingdoms were of equal rank, or if there was any primacy, it was enjoyed by *Tezcuco*, distinguished for its intellectual and moral culture. United, they did not extend beyond the valley of Mexico, whose circumference is only about three or four hundred miles. The interior organization of the three kingdoms was nearly the same, as might be expected to be the case with people of a common origin and language. By degrees they learned the truth of that maxim so seldom practised, but so true, that "union is strength." They extended their domain, and incorporated with them other powerful nations. Of the three, the greatest conqueror was the kingdom of the Aztecs, whose population was active, more resolute and energetic than the others. On the arrival of the Spaniards the Mexican emperor exercised over his confederates an uncontradicted supremacy. He consulted them in circumstances of grave importance, but they had, in fact, become only the first of his vassals.

The political organization was military and theocratic, but not without many restrictions. This seems to be the universal *point de départ* of all great nations. But it differed from that of India and Egypt in the fact that the population was unfettered by the slavery of castes. Children usually adopted the professions of their fathers, but this happens almost in every established community. There existed a nobility of more than one degree, possessed of immunities such as exemption from taxation, but what we call in Europe state offices, were not hereditary. The emperor delegated them to any one recommended by his own exploits. Even in the imperial family when the children were small, they were postponed to the uncle. A noble detracted nothing from his position by agricultural pursuits. "Give thyself up," said a father to his son, "to field labor or to *plumaje*; choose some honorable profession. Thus did thy ancestors before thee; how otherwise would they have been able to provide for their own existence and for that of their families. Nowhere have I learned that man may exist on his nobility alone." Such ideas suppose between the privileged and the common men an absence of profound demarkation. Therefore every one who distinguished himself in war was ennobled. "It is the custom," said one of the conquerors, "to recompense very generously soldiers who distinguish themselves." Were he of the humblest class of men, a brave soldier is made a leader and noble; vassals are given him, and he enjoys

high esteem, and everywhere is respected as a lord. In one of the last encounters, a Spanish officer having asked that some nobles might be sent to treat with him, was answered, "We are all nobles."

The Aztec princes had established distinctions similar to our orders of chivalry, having their distinctive ensigns and peculiar privileges. It seems that there was an inferior grade to be acquired in order to possess the privilege of wearing ornaments on the person; till that was gained, all, of whatever social position, were compelled to wear clothing of the coarse fibres of the aloe. The members of the imperial family even were subjected to this austere rule of the sumptuary law. Thus in the chivalry of the middle ages, a knight was forbidden to bear a banner or inscribe a device on his shield, until he should have signalized himself by some warlike emprise. The military orders of the Aztecs were accessible to all, without any distinction of birth. The emperors were members of them, only under certain conditions. Similar institutions existed among all the neighbors of the Aztecs.

In many of their customs we find traces of chivalry as it was understood in Europe. Thus, during the bloody wars of the Aztecs and people of Tlascala, the Aztecan nobles sent to the latter cotton, salt, cacao, and other productions which their country only furnished, and which during hostility could not be obtained by the people of Tlascala. These articles were accompanied by courteous messages. Nothing derogatory to the honor of either party resulted therefrom, for immediately afterwards, they set to work to cut each others' throats with the greatest *sang-froid*.

Men of letters enjoyed the greatest consideration. We have seen that kings mingled with perfect equality in associations very similar to our academies. Commerce was held in greatest esteem. Merchants passed about in large caravans, which were well armed. To the state they contributed much, by the information they obtained, not less than by the wealth which was the result of their exchanges. The credit enjoyed by this class, and by men of letters, is worthy of notice, and gives us a favorable idea of the old Mexican civilization. In the infancy of society, all distinction usually devolves on the warrior or the priest; no one else can partake of it.

Slavery existed among them, but it was merely personal, and not hereditary. They had a maxim of public law—that man is born free. The slave preserved two civil rights, which, not without reason, have been considered as incompatible with slavery, that of property and of family. A person became reduced to this condition by a decree of a court in criminal process, for the discharge of debts to the

state, or by a voluntary sale. Parents in this manner might sell their children. The laws protected the slave, and rigorously stipulated for his rights; by the master he was treated with kindness, as a member of his family, as is now done in the East. He rarely sold him except for vice or positive disobedience. We need not say that prisoners of war were reduced to slavery, where not appropriated to yet worse purposes.

Laws were regularly promulgated, and tribunals established to enforce them. Among the Aztecs there were three jurisdictions, the officers of the first of which were elective, and the last resided, in each territorial district, in a single judge appointed by the prince, and not removable, from whose decrees there was no appeal. In civil affairs there were but two degrees of jurisdiction. In the kingdom of Tezcuco, the judicial organization was different, but still was conformable to principles of justice and equity. Mexican law was extremely severe. The penalty of death was awarded to many crimes, for adultery, for many specified thefts, to the proprietor who should alter landmarks, and even to an heir who should surrender himself to drunkenness and dissipate his fortune. In comparison with the good king NEZAHUALCOYOTL, author of the code of the kingdom of Tezcuco, his neighbors would have esteemed Draco a lawgiver full of kindness.

The administration watched over a great many of the public necessities. Taxes were collected with the greatest exactness. They were paid in kind, and vast granaries and magazines were prepared to receive them. Woe to the wretch who could not satisfy them! The inexorable officer sold him as a public debtor! Originally moderate, under the last emperors the taxes became onerous, because the princes had become accustomed to a number of artificial wants, and because, to maintain distant provinces in subjection, they were forced to keep in play large armies.

As in all states who feel their power to be increasing and have a disposition to conquer, the army was a great object of national solicitude. Therefore, under the last Montezuma,* the Aztec empire was provided with an institution similar to that, whose establishment constitutes one of Louis XIV.'s greatest claims to memory — its *Hotel des Invalides*.

With the same reference to an increase of their power, the Aztec emperors practised arts which seem always to accompany a refined and already corrupted civilization. In the history of the conquest we

* There were two sovereigns of this name, the first of whom was celebrated.

learn that Montezuma had in his pay some of the intimate advisers of sovereigns who were allied with him; in this manner he was able to prepare a stratagem for Cacamatzin, who occupied the throne of Tezcuco, and to place him in the hands of Cortez.

The government was an absolute monarchy; not, however, without some limitations. There were great vassals with whom much diplomacy was necessary to keep on good terms. He kept them near his person, during a great portion of the year, in his capital, where they led an idle existence, surrounded by his creatures: these were the chiefs of conquered tribes whose assimilation with the Aztecs was imperfect, because as yet unsanctioned by the passage of time. The Aztec monarchs had, however, been able to convert fidelity to their persons into a species of religious dogma, which, at the time of the conquest, was observed in the ratio of the time since the conquest of the several countries and their proximity to the metropolis. In the prince all legislative power was concentrated, though there is reason to believe the great Caciques preserved it somewhat modified in their several domains.

In the second place the people had a valuable guarantee against absolutism in the immobility of the judges of the highest grade. Whatever respect may have surrounded the person of the prince, the people do not appear to have lived in the degradation of servility. Their utter submission was not without its dignity, and we may believe that to the Mexican the sentiment of duty to his sovereign corresponded to a certain degree with the preservation of individual rights. Some proof of this may be found in the discourses preserved by the Oidor Zurita, in which the chiefs address the emperor, and their wives the empress. They are opinions frankly expressed, and no legislative chamber of Europe, whatever spirit of opposition might animate it, would venture thus to address a sovereign. The following phrase is a fair exemplification of their general tenor.

“God has done you a great favor in putting you in his place; doubt not, therefore, that the powerful master who has given you so weighty a charge will assist you, and reward you with the crown of honor if you be not conquered by wickedness.”

The discourse of the high priest to the emperor, on the occasion of what may be called his consecration, was of a similar character. It contained ceremonies well calculated to impress on the lofty of the earth their duty towards the people. “The new dignitary (the future sovereign elevated to the rank of a *TECLE*), was conducted into the interior of the temple, where he sometimes remained for one or two years in penitential observance. He sat upon the earth by day, and

at night a mat only was given him to rest upon. At given hours of the night he entered the temple to burn incense, and during each of the first four days he slept only for a few hours. Near him were guards who, whenever he became wearied, pricked him with the *metl* or *maguey*, which are sharp as needles, saying, "Arouse thee; thou shouldst not sleep, but watch over the interest of thy vassals, and reflect on it. Thou hast taken charge of them not to win thee rest. Sleep should fly from thy eyelids, which should ever be unclosed that thou mayest watch over thy people."*

In the forms of taking possession of power we may easily trace indications of the exercise of popular sovereignty. The heir presumptive was probably decorated with the title of *Tecle* or *Tecuitle*, the most honorable of their distinctions. After many religious ceremonies, the people insulted him with opprobrious language, and heaped blows on him to test his patience. Such was their resignation that not a word was uttered, and the head even unturned to see who they were who thus treated with indignity the future monarch.

The political and social organization of the Aztecs was thus summed up by Cortez to Charles V. "As far as the obedience they show towards their sovereign; and their daily life, these Indians very much resemble the Spaniards, and there is among them good order almost equal to that in Spain. If we take into consideration that this people is barbarous, and without a knowledge of God, and of any connection with other people, and without reason,* we must with astonishment behold how wisely everything is administered."

V.—OF THE PECULIARITIES OF THE RELIGION OF THE MEXICANS AND OF THEIR PRAYERS.

THE Mexicans believed in a Supreme God, Creator, and master of the universe. In their prayers, they distinguished him thus: "God, through whom we live, who art omnipresent and omniscient, the giver of all good;" or "the invisible, incorporeal God, perfection and purity, under whose wings are found eternal repose and an inviolate asylum." Inferior to this Supreme Being were ranged thirteen

* This passage and the preceding one are extracts from Zurita. The first refers to the sons and heirs of the chiefs of Tlascala, which was governed by an oligarchy of four chiefs. The second refers not only to Tlascala but to Cholula, a fief of the Aztec empire, and to Huetzocingo, which, though a kindred, was always an independent nation.

† The phrase without reason used by Cortez means barbarous; he elsewhere says the Mexicans are intellectual.

inferior divinities, and more than two hundred of a yet lower grade, having each a day consecrated to them and receiving appropriate honors. The Aztecs especially honored the god of war HUITZILOPUCHTLI, whose image was borne before them as the Hebrews bore the ark of the Lord, in their long pilgrimage from AZTLAN to TENOCHTITLAN.

Among the divinities of the Mexican Olympus, another whose name during the conquest is often heard, was the god of air, QUETZALCOATL. He had dwelt upon the earth and taught mankind the arts of agriculture, of working in minerals, and the more difficult yet, of government. He closed his ears, it was said, whenever spoken to of war. According to the Aztec mythology, he had imparted to the man the incomparable pleasures of the golden age of the Greeks. Under his control, the earth without cultivation was covered with fruits and flowers; a single stalk of maize afforded sustenance for a man, as did the bunches of grapes which the hungry Jews, after wanderings for forty years, found in the land of Canaan; cotton grew on the bush already dyed in many and rich hues. The air was filled with perfume, and birds of brilliant plumage uttered ceaselessly an ever-changing melody. But this paternal God incurred the enmity of a more powerful divinity, and was forced to quit the country. In his exile he paused at the city of Cholula, where afterwards a temple was erected to him, the pyramidal base of which yet exists. When he reached the shores of the Mexican Gulf he took leave of the faithful few who had followed him thus far, and promised that some day his children would return. Having said this, he entered his skiff made of the skins of serpents, and steered his course towards the mystic land of Tlapallan, nothing of which was known except that it was in the east beyond the seas, that is to say, in the direction of Europe. Was the fable of QUETZALCOATL a tradition under a marvelous form, of the domination of the Toltecs, who had introduced into Mexico the arts and sciences, and subsequently disappeared. Did it refer to the appearance on some point of the American continent of a lost child of Europe, borne by the current which is found near the equator, and the gentle winds which prevail there, or else tempest driven on the shores of the Mexican Gulf? Or does it indicate a cloudy tradition of some Scandinavian expedition to America during the tenth, eleventh, or twelfth century?

Whatever may be the truth, the memory of the happy era of Quetzalcoatl, and the hope of his return, were graven in their hearts; they expected him as a Messiah. The red-skinned and almost beardless Indians impressed on their children that QUETZALCOATL was of lofty

stature, with a white skin, black hair and bearded. There could not be fabricated a better prophecy of the coming of the Spaniards.

The tradition of Quetzalcoatl has many prototypes in the mythologies of the Old World; but the Mexicans had legends which in other modes resembled the fabulous stories of Greece. As we read what has been preserved of them, we almost fancy a translation of the metamorphoses of Ovid is before us. I shall quote for example's sake an extract from Boturini, until now untranslated.

"A man named Yappan, wishing to win the favor of the gods, left his wife and family, and withdrew into a desert to lead a life of chastity and contemplation, and built a cabin near an altar of stone consecrated to penitence; but the gods, who doubted the sincerity of his conversion, charged YAOTL, his mortal enemy, to watch him continually and keep an account of every action. Yappan for a long time resisted many beautiful women sent to tempt him, so that the gods began to praise his virtue and laugh at TLAZOLTEOTL, the goddess of love, and say that Yappan was not, like other mortals, subject to her; until, piqued by their ridicule, she said, Do you believe that Yappan will persevere to the end to merit the recompense you grant to the virtuous? I will myself descend to the earth to show how fragile is human virtue, and how little mankind are able to resist my power.

"The goddess approached the house of Yappan, but perceiving him seated on the altar of penitence, knew that there she could exert no power over him. She said, in a tender voice, Come hither to me, Yappan; I am the goddess TLAZOLTEOTL, come to bring to thee the reward of thy virtue. Deceived by her words, Yappan hastened to her, but scarcely had he left the altar when he felt a new fire circulate through his veins, and he fell into the snare prepared for him.

"YAOTL, who all the while watched him, became indignant at this conduct, so that he could not restrain himself, but approached Yappan saying, Wretch, are you not ashamed to deceive the gods and profane their sanctuary? and cut off his head with one blow of the sword. Yappan fell upon the earth with his arms open, and the gods changed him into a scorpion of the color of ashes, which always has its limbs extended. The vengeance of YAOTL was not yet satisfied, but he went to look for TLAHUITZIN, Yappan's wife, and said to her, after showing her the body of her husband, See how I have punished one who dared to offend the gods; but my vengeance will be unsatisfied till you partake of his lot. He immediately slew her also, and her head fell close by Yappan's. She too was changed into a female scorpion, and entering into a crevice of the altar to hide herself, found her husband there.

"The Mexicans say all scorpions are descended from these two, and that, mortified at the crime of Yappan, they dare not show themselves, but hide behind stones. YAOTL did not escape punishment for his double crime, but was changed into a grasshopper."—(*Idea de una Nueva Historia de la America Septentrional*, par Boturini.)

In the popular faith of Mexico, many traits of common resemblance to all the religions of the Old World will be found, from which a harmony results which cannot be accounted for, except by the supposition that all have a common cradle. Thus the Mexicans believed in the

deluge ; their Noah, called Coxcox, was saved in a vessel. They had a legend which recalls to us the Tower of Babel ; the history of our mother Eve and the serpent had its analogous story in their faith. A more surprising thing also is that many of their practices and their dogmas bear a close resemblance to Christianity ; they believed in the existence of original sin, and purified themselves from it by baptism. They thought the human race had been placed on the earth for punishment, and implored, with never-ceasing prayers, the pity of God. "When a child is born," says Zurita, "its parents salute it saying : thou art come to suffer, suffer, therefore, and be patient." Among the objects of their worship the cross was conspicuous. This fact is well established by twenty testimonies from Yucatan, which adjoined ancient Mexico, and is a part of the modern republic. It cannot be doubted to have been so in Mexico proper, for we read in the voyages of Grijalva, the predecessor of Cortez, on this coast, "at the island called Uloa, (now St. John d'Ulloa, the citadel of Vera Cruz,) a cross of white marble was worshiped, on the summit of which is a crown of gold ; on this cross they say one beautiful and glorious as the sun died." They had confession and absolution established among them. The secrets of their penitential tribunal, for here the word may be applied with great propriety, were inviolable. But they confessed but once in a lifetime, and therefore postponed it as long as possible. Probably, because at the epoch of the arrival of the Spaniards, there was a confusion between the political act and the religious rite, in consequence of the pre-eminence assumed by the clergy in state affairs, and the influence which they exerted over the mind of the emperor ; and religious absolution purified them from crime, even of responsibility to the secular power ; so that, after the conquest, Indians prosecuted by the civil power have been known to tender in full justification a confessional ticket signed by the priest of their village. Finally, they had a ceremony very similar to that of the Eucharist, in which their priests distributed among them fragments of an image of their divinities, which they swallowed with signs of humiliation, saying it was the very flesh of the god they worshiped.

Their priests preached sentiments of charity, pardon, and the forgiveness of wrong. "Live in peace with all the world," said one of their homilies, "bear injuries with humility, and confide to an all-seeing God the duty of revenge."

The rules of individual morality inspired the kindest feelings towards their fellows ; one might truly say a Christian charity. In the exhortation with which the confession terminated, the priest said to the penitent, "Feed thou the hungry, clothe the naked, whatever

privations be thine own in consequence thereof, for the flesh of the unfortunate is thy flesh, and they are men as thou art human."

VI. ON MANNERS AND SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

THE manners of the Aztecs were not dissolute; on the contrary, they were rather severe. With the exception of the chiefs who possessed many concubines, they had but one wife, and the concubines of princes were recognized by law, and enjoyed certain privileges. "Whoso looks at a woman with too much curiosity, commits adultery with his eyes." These are almost the words of Christ recorded by Saint Matthew. Marriage was protected by many formalities, and celebrated with great solemnity. Divorce was only permitted under certain circumstances, and by the decision of a tribunal especially established to decide on disputes originating from the marriage-tie. Adultery was capitally punished, and the history of the reign of King NEZAHUALPILLI offers three striking examples of its infliction. One on the queen, wife of this prince, who was of no lower rank than that of a daughter of the imperial house. The princess and her accomplices were judged and sentenced according to all the rigor of the law in spite of their exalted rank. The second instance was that of a noble lady who surrendered her person to him without revealing that she was married, and the third was his own son who had carried on in verse a correspondence with one of the royal concubines, for cases of which kind the law made a special provision. The tribunals pronounced the sentence, and the father suffered it to be enforced, though for weeks afterwards he shut himself within his palace, devoured by grief, and secluding himself from every one.

The social position of women more closely resembled what they occupy in Europe than in Asia. They were not shut up in harems, nor were their feet mutilated. They went unveiled, as with us, and were guests at every entertainment and festival. We in France, in the nineteenth century, have a province in which women are not admitted to festivals, and seem to live only to serve with due humility, the lords of creation. Mexican women were exempt from hard labor, which men reserved to themselves with a delicacy which might now be imitated with much propriety in many parts of Western Europe, and which, of all civilized nations, the English and their descendants alone observe. In Mexico, it is true, things were not in the position they now are in England, but the intention existed. There are few signs which so clearly demonstrate the advance of

civilization, as courtesy to females. In savage tribes, women are beasts of burden. There is, on the whole surface of the globe, neither for man nor beast, a worse condition than that occupied by the squaws of the North American Indians throughout the whole extent of the territories of the United States. How often, in our own provinces, seeing women ascend steep declivities with baskets of manure on their shoulders, and descend with bundles of hay and corn from the lofty table-lands, have I wished that there might be within the circumference of the valley no Englishman come to purchase a warm sun and genial sky with his British guineas. A certain test of the position of the women in Mexico, is that they were admitted to the sacerdotal profession. The Mexicans had priestesses as well as priests, and there was a similar scale of rank for one sex as well as the other; but the great sacrifices, it will be seen hereafter, were reserved only to the priests of the highest rank. The purity of the Mexican priestesses has been attested by the Spanish monks who accompanied the conquerors, who still, however, heaped anathemas on the religion of the Aztecs, in which they saw everywhere the distinct impression of the cloven foot of the devil, and the whisking of his tail.

An intimate and exact knowledge of a civilization may be obtained by examination of its social habits, and forms of intercourse, and of civility. Now, of those of the Mexicans, we can form a very positive opinion from the instructions of a father to his son, of a mother to her daughter, in each of the social grades, which happily have been preserved and published by Zurita. I shall quote at length the advice of parents of the middle classes, or in Zurita's own words, inhabitants of the town, merchants and mechanics. They are at once a collection of moral precepts, and an abridged code of juvenile purity and honor.*

* ADVICE OF A FATHER TO HIS SON.

“Ah, my beloved son, created by the will of God, under the eyes of thy parents, like a fledgeling just escaped from the shell, thou seekest to fly, but canst do so with difficulty. We know not when the great God will permit us to rejoice in thee: pray to him, my child, to assist thee, for he is thy Creator, and loves thee better than I can do. Address to him thine aspirations by night and by day, and he will be merciful to thee, and deliver thee from every danger. Respect the image of thy God and all that is his. Pray to him devoutly, observe his festivals; for who offends God dies miserably and guiltily.

* Alonzo de Zurita was a lawyer, who wrote in Mexico, where he lived for nineteen years. He was auditor of the high court (*la audiencia real*) of Mexico.

"Honor and respect the aged ; console the poor and the afflicted by thy words and good works.

"Revere and love thy father and mother ; obey them, for bitter is the repentance of the ill-behaving.

"Honor and treat all with respect, then wilt thou live in peace.

"Copy not the conduct of fools who live like animals, hear no advice, and respect not their parents.

"Be careful, my son, not to laugh at the aged, the sick, the halt, or any who are unhappy. Be not haughty to them nor hate them, but humble thyself before God, through fear that thou mayst become unhappy as they are.

"Poison no one, lest thou offend God in the person of his creature. Thy crime will surely be discovered, and thou wilt die the same death.

"Be honest, polite, and insult no one.

"Mingle not uncalled for in the affairs of others, lest thou be called troublesome, and indiscreet.

"Wound not the feelings of another ; avoid adultery and luxury. These are vices which ruin whoever yields to them, and are hateful to God.

"Give no bad advice.

"Be modest in thy conversation, interrupt not those who speak. If they speak badly, they commit an error ; be thou careful not to imitate them. Speak not when thou hast no cause, and when questioned, answer openly and honestly without passion or falsehood. If you are careful, my son, not to circulate stories and repeat unpleasant jests, you will avoid falsehood, and create no discord, which produces much grief to whoever indulges in them. Be not a loungeur in the streets, lose not thy time in the baths and public places, lest a devil tempt and enslave thee.

"Be not too careful in thy dress, for it is an index of a petty mind.

"In whatever situation thou mayst be, conduct thyself with modesty. Make no grimaces, and avoid vulgar gestures, else thou wilt be thought a libertine, and this is one of the devil's own snares. Take no one by the hand or garments, for this is a sure mark of indiscretion. Pay attention, when you walk, not to obstruct the pathway.

"Should any one ask you to take charge of any business, and offer you any inducement, reflect if it be not a snare set for thee, and if you think so, excuse thyself, though profit ultimately may result to thee from it. Do so, and thou wilt be considered wise and prudent.

"Neither enter nor leave a room before thy superiors ; take not precedence of them ; leave to them always the place of honor, and seek not to deprive any one of it, at least until thy dignity shall have been exalted. Be modest, for humility wins the grace of God, and of the great.

"Be not eager in eating or drinking, and if at table, be courteous to all around thee, offering frequently. If thou featest in company and gorgest thyself, thou wilt be esteemed a glutton. When thou eatest, keep thine eyes cast down, and finish not before others do, lest thou give offence.

"Scorn not any offering that may be made thee, and think not that thou deservest more, for then thou wilt receive it neither from God nor man.

"Confide thyself entirely to God, for from him all good things come, and thou canst not know how near is the approach of death.

"I shall be careful to provide thee with all thou needest ; suffer and be patient. If thou wishest a wife, say so to me, but as thou art my child, take not one without consulting me.

"Be neither a gamester nor a thief, for one of these vices produceth the

other. If thou follow my advice, thou wilt not be abused in the streets and public places.

"Follow the path of rectitude, oh my son. Sow good seed, and thou shalt gather a rich harvest. Thou wilt live by thine own labor, and thy parents will be happy in thee.

"Man can live only with sorrow—and the necessities of life are had with difficulty. With much trouble have I brought thee up, yet have never abandoned thee or done aught to make thee blush.

"Wouldst thou live quietly, indulge not in slander, for it produceth many disputes.

"Keep closely what you hear; it is better another tell things than thee; but when you do speak, speak boldly.

"Tell not what you see. Be discreet, for a chattering disposition is an evil thing, and the liar is sure of punishment. Be silent, for no man profits by talking.

"If thou shouldst be sent to any one who receives thee with severity, and who should abuse the person who sent thee, bear not back this answer, spoken, perhaps, in anger. Shouldst thou be questioned as to thy reception, answer kindly, in mild language. Conceal the reproaches that have been spoken, lest both parties be irritated and do some rash act, so that hereafter thou shalt say '*had I but held my peace!*' It will then be too late, and you will be esteemed an inexcusable mischief-maker.

"Have nothing to do with your neighbor's wife; live chastely, for we cannot live this life twice over, and it is short and a troublesome career.

"Offend no one; attack no one's honor; render thyself worthy of the recompenses God grants to whomsoever he wills. Receive from and be thankful to him for whatever he may bestow, but become not proud. If thou art humble, thy merit will be the greater, and others will have no occasion to murmur. But if, on the other hand, thou shouldst attribute to thyself what thou meritest not, men will be offended at, and God angry with thee.

"When any one speaketh to thee, move neither the hands nor the feet, look neither to the right nor left, move thyself not from thy seat, nor take one. If thou actest otherwise, thou wilt be able to remain in the house of no one.

"My son, if thou hearken not to thy father's words, thy end will come soon, because thou deservest that it should.

"Be not angry that God hath given less to thee than to others, for then thou wilt offend God, who has placed thee in an honorable position.

"If thou art what thou shouldst be, thou wilt be held up to others as a model.

"This, oh son, is the advice of a father who loveth thee; abide by it, and thou wilt prosper."

ADVICE OF A MOTHER TO HER DAUGHTER.

"I have borne thee, my daughter; I have properly educated and nourished thee. The honor of thy father rests on thee. If thou dost not thy duty, thou canst not live with virtuous women, and no one will marry thee.

"We live in this world with pain and trouble; our strength becometh exhausted; we must then obey the God who will aid us, sustain us, and grant us health. We must be active and careful to acquire what our necessities demand.

"Avoid, my beloved daughter, idleness and negligence; be neat and industrious; take care of thine own room, and see that it be in good order, that everything be in its proper place. Thus wilt thou have learned to discharge thy duty when thou becomest a wife.

“Wherever thou goest, be modest; walk not too rapidly, laughing and looking behind thee at the men who pass. Do thus, and thy reputation for modesty will be established.

“Be polite, and speak with circumspection; and when a question is asked thee, answer it circumspectly and clearly.

“Mind thy housework, weave and spin. Thou wilt then be loved and wilt merit to receive the necessities of life; thou wilt be happy if thou thankest God, who hath gifted thee with such talents.

“Yield not thyself to sloth or idleness. Be not anxious to remain in bed, in the shade, or in the fresh air, for if thou dost so, thou wilt become idle and negligent. Such women will neither be respected nor loved.

“Whether sitting or walking, resting or working, render thy conduct always praiseworthy, my daughter. Do thy duty as thou hast been commanded by God and thy parents.

“Let not thyself be called twice; come promptly to see what is wanted with thee, that no one may be compelled to rebuke thy sloth and disobedience.

“Listen to the commands given thee and answer not saucily; and if thou canst not obey them without sin, excuse thyself, but do not utter a falsehood or deceive any one, for God sees thee.

“If thou hearest a person called who is not near, go promptly thyself to see what is wanted. Do whatever may be asked, and people will think kindly of thee.

“Should any one give thee good advice, profit by and despise it not, lest people have bad thoughts of thee.

“Walk neither hastily nor boldly, lest people think thee an impure woman.

“Be charitable; hate and despise no one; avoid avarice, put no bad interpretation on trifles, and be not jealous of the gifts of God to others.

“Wrong no one lest thou too suffer wrong; avoid evil, and follow not the promptings of thy heart, which may deceive thee and render thee vicious, an object of shame to thyself and thy parents.

“Avoid the society of liars, of idle and gossiping women; they will ruin thee.

“Take care of thy house, go not out of doors for amusement, waste not thy time in the market place, the public squares and baths. To do so is wrong, and thus young women become corrupt and vicious, and bad thoughts are produced.

“When a man speaketh to thee, listen not to him, nor answer, but be silent. Speak not to him, for thy words will but inflame his passion; if you pay no attention to him, he will cease to follow thee.

“Go not unnecessarily into the house of thy neighbor, lest they chatter about thee when thou art gone.

“If thou goest to see thy relations, be respectful to them; be not idle, but assist in any occupation they may be engaged in if thou knowest how, but sit not as an idle spectator.

“If thy parents select for thee a husband, thou shouldst love, hearken to, obey, and take pleasure in whatever he enjoins. When he speaks to thee, turn not thy head away as if he uttered something unpleasant; seek to conquer thy dislike. If he liveth from thy property, do not on that account despise him; be neither rude nor unkind, for then thou wilt offend God, and thy husband will dislike thee. Tell him thy thoughts kindly; use not offensive language to him when others are by, or even when ye be alone. If thou dost so, the shame and contempt are thine own.

“Should any one visit thy husband receive him kindly.

“Should thy husband misbehave, tell him freely, but kindly thine opinion, and advise him to take care of his estate.

“Be attentive to what labor is being done on thy lands, and take care of the products thereof.

“Waste not thy stores; aid thy husband in his labor. Thus wilt thou not want necessities, and thou wilt provide for thy family and the education of thy children.

“My daughter, if thou abidest by my advice, thou wilt be loved and respected by all; thou wilt live happily. If not, the fault will be thine; you will soon learn the consequences of not having listened to me, and will not be able to say that I gave thee not good advice as a mother should.”

In the discourse of a father to his son, and especially in that of a mother to her daughter, there is not a single word which in this the nineteenth century, parents would think unfit advice to give to a child. A yet more remarkable thing is, that very little could even now be added to it.*

VII. HUMAN SACRIFICE.

DID we judge by the sentiments alone propagated by the religion of the Aztecons, by the practices recommended to govern the mutual intercourse of men, by the moral ideas received among them as rules of conduct, they were a wise and benevolent people; and Philadelphia could not more justly advance a claim to be called the city of brotherly love than Mexico. But alas for the fragile nature of man, and the contradictions of the human heart! These charitable practices and sentiments, this benevolence and equity, this solicitude for the condition of women, justly considered a conclusive proof of the existence of gentle manners and social refinement, by a frightful sophistication of the heart and reason, were combined with constant offering of human sacrifices and the festivals of cannibals. Men were often sacrificed on the altars of their gods, and the bodies of the victims were solemnly devoured at the most luxuriously prepared banquets and festivals. They had, we have said, a sacrament resembling the Eucharist; the bread which was there made use of was saturated with blood. The mind seems utterly confounded when it discovers that among the Mexicans, these ceremonies were not a relic of barbarism, transmitted from father to son, and maintained by a civilized nation from a stupid respect for its barbarous progenitors. It is a sufficient reason to change into a bitter skepticism that faith in human perfectibility which many generous souls so fondly cherish. These

* These relics of Aztecon literature bear internal evidence of having been retouched by some Spanish priest.—*Translator.*

frightful ideas took possession of the Aztecs when they had progressed far on the road to civilization. In proportion as they advanced, and their knowledge of the arts increased, the more devoted they seemed to become to these atrocities. They seem to have been fascinated by an infernal demon, and, as the Spaniards thought, to have almost had direct intercourse with Satan.

We will quote a few passages from M. Humboldt, relative to the origin of the human sacrifices of Mexico.

"After the commencement of the fourteenth century, the Aztecs lived under the government of the King of Colhuacan. They had principally contributed to the victory gained by this king over the XOCHIMILQUES. When the war was over, they wished to offer a sacrifice to their principal god, HUITZILOPOCHTLI or MEXITLI, the god of war, whose image placed in a wicker-chair, called the seat of God, was borne by four priests; they asked of their master, the King of Colhuacan, to give them some valuables, wherewith to perform this solemn rite. The king sent them a dead bird wrapped in coarse cloth; and to add yet another insult, offered himself to be present at the sacrifice. The Aztecs pretended to be content with this offer, but at the same time they resolved to perform a sacrifice which should strike terror into the hearts of their masters. After a long dance around their idol, they led forward four XOCHIMILQUE prisoners, whom they had for a long time concealed. These unfortunates were immolated with ceremonies, which were subsequently faithfully copied until the coming of the Spaniards, on the platform of the great pyramid of Tenochtitlan, dedicated to the god of war, HUITZILOPOCHTLI. The Colhues exhibited a just horror at the human sacrifice, the first in their land. Fearing the atrocity of the Aztecs, who were subject to them, but who had become presuming on account of their victory over the XOCHIMILQUES, they enfranchized them on the sole condition that they left immediately the territory of Colhuacan.

"The first sacrifice led to happy results for an oppressed people. The cause of the second was revenge. After the building of Tenochtitlan, Aztec was hunting on the shore of the lake for some animal to be offered as a sacrifice to MEXITLI, and met an inhabitant of Colhuacan, called XOMIMTL. Irritated against his old oppressors, he immediately attacked the COLHUA, who was overcome and taken a prisoner to the new city, where he was immolated on the fatal stone placed at the feet of the idol.

"The circumstances of the third sacrifice are yet more horrible. Peace had been apparently established between the ACOLHUES and the AZTECS. But the priests of MEXITLI could not restrain their anger against that nation, which once had been their masters. They meditated a terrible vengeance. They persuaded the King of COLHUACAN to confide to them his only daughter to be educated in the temple of MEXITLI, that after her death she might be adored as the mother of the protecting god of the Aztecs. They said that the God himself had so ordered by the mouth of his image. The credulous king brought his daughter, and accompanied her into the gloomy enclosure of the temple. There the priest separated the father and child, and a tumult was heard in the sanctuary. The father could distinguish the cries of his daughter; a censor was placed in his hand, and he was told to light the COPAL it contained. By the flickering blaze which rose from it, he saw his daughter lifeless and gory, bound to a stake. He lost immediately his reason, which he never regained. He could not re-

venge himself, and the ACOIHUES were afraid to enter into a contest with a people who struck terror, by such barbarity, into the minds of all their enemies. The murdered girl was placed among the AZTECAN divinities, and called TERCIONAN, *mother of the gods*, or TOCITZIN, *our grandmother*, a goddess we must not confound with Eve or the serpent's wife, called TONANTZIN."

In a short time they began to devour the bodies of their victims.

Whatever may have been the origin of human sacrifices among the Aztecs, this abominable custom originated, not in bestial ferocity but from religious superstition. The Mexicans regarded the sojourn of man upon earth as an expiation and period of probation. Every dogma of their religion shows they believed all beings on earth doomed to languish, and to be redeemed, as St. Paul says. They were satisfied that the divinity is appeased by blood. Blood, they thought, satisfies and turns away wrath. Thus it was that they preserved as a religious ceremony, what in its origin had been an horrible revenge on the King of COLHUACAN. Solis, in his *Conquest of Mexico*, places this explanation of the origin of human sacrifices in the mouth of a venerable TLASCALAN Cacique, MAGISCATZIN (*called by Mr. Prescott, MAXIXCA*). In an interview with Cortez, this chief said his countrymen could not conceive of any efficacious sacrifice other than the death of one individual for the good of his fellows.

This religious idea of the Mexicans relative to the efficacy of blood shed upon the altars was common to them and to the rest of antiquity. All mankind, civilized and savage, before the coming of Christ, in the spilling of blood expected to find redemption, because blood, the source of life, appeared to them the most agreeable offering to the enraged gods. Until the era of Christianity, the blood of man was everywhere shed as an expiation of the anger of the gods, in spite of the protestations of reason and humanity. Generally, but not universally, the blood of man was replaced by that of animals. It has been remarked that in all the Mosaic ceremonies there is not a single one of which the oblation of blood is not a necessary item. Even Christianity, which forbids the effusion of blood, has preserved in what De Maistre calls the doctrine of substitution, a recognition of this old idea. The sins of our fathers and of ourselves are washed away by an expiation of blood. For the absolution of the world from the original sin, a baptism of blood was required. The most learned doctors of the church teach that "in the immolation of Christ the altar was on Calvary, but the blood of the victim was poured forth on the universe." This was said by Origen, who did not wish his words to be taken in a purely metaphorical sense, but with reference to a mysteri-

ous accomplishment of all that he had expressed. Once, however, the blood of God was shed, and dispensed with that of any other *host*, and now our temples are unsullied by any earthly victim. It may be moreover noticed that the sacrifice of the Redeemer was not once for all, but is perpetual; that the mass is not a simple commemoration, and that the blood of Christ is a daily offering.

From the experience of the world it is easy to see that as De Maistre has said, the human sacrifices of the Mexicans, and of people of ancient and modern times, who were strangers to Christianity, had their origin in the universal conscience of the human race, and in a truth whose purity was forgotten and unappreciated.

Religious causes alone can fully account for the rigor of the penal code of the Mexicans, for the idea of enforcing obedience by the influence of fear alone, is insufficient to explain it. The Mexicans thought, as Cesar represents the Druids to have imagined, that the punishment of crime was pleasant to the gods.

In vindication of these customs we must say that human sacrifices were adopted in Mexico, only after great resistance. The adjoining tribes conceived the greatest horror of the Aztecs. At a later day the great King NEZAHUALCOYOTL contended for a long time against the inclination his subjects had conceived for these butcheries, and attempted to lead them back to the pure faith of the TOLTECS. But as no children were born to him by the wife he had taken from the old lord of TEPECHPAN, the priests persuaded him it was because of the anger of the gods, who were indignant that no blood was shed upon their altars, so that at last he yielded. The blood of man was again offered to the gods, though the expected heir came not, so that he cried out "These idols of wood and stone can neither hear nor feel; it is impossible that they are the lords of earth and of man its master. There is an unknown omnipotent and invisible God, Creator of all things, who alone can sustain me in the trouble and anguish I suffer." He retired to the gardens of TEZCOTZINGO, and passed forty days in fasting and prayer, and in offering to the gods incense of copal and aromatic herbs. His wishes were granted. Then avowing openly antipathy to these bloody sacrifices, he erected a temple to the God we have referred to, with this inscription, "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD, THE CAUSE OF CAUSES," and forbade human and even animal oblations in the temples. After his death, which took place in 1470, a half century before the conquest, the temples of the kingdom of TEZCUCO again were befouled with blood, almost equally with those of the AZTECS.

Mr. Prescott, who has little taste for theological discussions, has

assigned purely human motives to the origin of the Mexican sacrifices. I have already declared what, according to the cotemporary historians of the conquest, I believe to be the real cause. But Mr. Prescott's assertion that every act of man has a human origin, yet exists. The policy of the emperors and the ambition of the sacerdotal officers, both were advanced by these sacrifices. All earthly powers love to inspire fear; this inclination they cannot overcome. Fear inculcates obedience, which is the first demand of government; but in proportion as governments reap advantage from this axiom, they wish to extend its influence, and after, instead of respectful fear, have recourse to that of vague apprehension. Beyond the influence of European civilization we have constant evidence of this, and the spectacle is not unknown in the bosom of our own institutions. The execrable sacrifices of the AZTECS were not only the results of a sincere religious belief, as everything goes to show, in the minds of the princes and priests, but were, moreover, necessary to the maintenance of their authority. As has been remarked of the gladiatorial spectacles of the Romans, the sight of blood nourished the military energy of the people, and counterbalanced the influence of art and luxury which tended to enervate them. These sacrifices increased the chances of the AZTECAN emperor to keep alive the energy of the army required to overawe his subject provinces. Whether it be the consequence of superstition, or of frightful policy, in proportion as the empire was enlarged, human sacrifices became more numerous; never were there so many sacrifices as under the reign of the last MONTEZUMA, who continually increased the number of his victims. The companions of Cortez had patience and nerve enough to count the skulls arranged as trophies in the enclosure of one of the temples, in which they found 136,000. The moderate computations say that at the era of the conquest, 20,000 a year were sacrificed. At the inauguration of the great temple of the god HUITZILOPOTCHLI, at Mexico, in 1486, thirty-three years before the conquest, 70,000 victims, collected from every portion of the empire during many years, were sacrificed at one time. This butchery continued without ceasing for many days. The procession of victims was miles in length.

The victims were criminals and rebels; when a city had broken its faith to the emperor, it was ordered to surrender as victims a certain number of men, women, and children. But war was principally depended on to supply victims. At an interview with Cortez, the emperor, in reply to a question of *El Conquistador*, said that the reason why he did not make peace with the TLASCALANS, who were

willing to recognize his authority, was, that he knew not whither else to send his army for victims to the gods.

But all captives were not devoted to slaughter. The Mexicans had a great respect for personal courage, and they offered to the bravest of their prisoners a chance of safety.

"In the center of every city were circular edifices of brick or stone, about ten feet high. Steps led to the top of them, which were circular platforms, in the center of which were stones, in the center of each of which was an orifice. After certain ceremonies, the prisoner was placed on the platform, and attached by a cord around the ankle to this center stone. A sword and buckler were given him, and his captor advanced to attack him. Were he a second time successful, his courage was considered as tested, and he received an acknowledgment of it. If the prisoner were successful against his captor and six others, he was liberated, and all that he had lost in war restored to him. It happened once that a king of a town called HUECICINGUA (HUEXOTZINGO), in a contest with the lord of a neighboring city named TULA, advanced so far in the midst of his enemies that his own men could not keep pace with him. He performed feats of great prowess, but the enemy took him a prisoner to their own town. They celebrated their usual feast, and placed him on the platform, where seven men in succession advanced to attack him, each of whom he overcame. The inhabitants of HUEXOTZINGO, who had witnessed his valor, thought that should they liberate him they would have no future peace. They therefore resolved to kill him. They did so, but were ever afterwards condemned as disloyal traitors, because they had violated the established custom regarding captive chiefs."

Sprung from notions whose religious faith was identical, the victims submitted to their fate without murmurs. The populace looked on them as messengers sent to the deity, who received them kindly as sufferers in his name; oft besought them to intercede in its behalf with the gods, and remind them of what it wished for. Every one uttered to them his prayer, thus: "Since you go to the presence of God, beseech him to hearken to my prayer." They were richly dressed, and loaded with presents before their immolation. In the temple the captive partook of the festival and dance, and at the moment of his death the most important request to the gods was impressed upon his memory.

In the conquests of the Mexicans we meet with, even by the side of these frightful reservations for the altars of the gods, many traits of clemency. The history of the gradual increase of the Aztec empire by TEZOZOMOC, recently published by *M. Ternaux*, proves them not to have been pitiless conquerors. Sometimes they disguised their generosity in the most ingenious manner, as was afterward done by the barbarous enemies of the Roman Empire, and the bandit chiefs of the middle ages. I take one example from the annals of TEZOZOMOC. It relates to the Emperor AXAYACATL, the father of MONTE-

ZUMA, after the assault of the city of Tlatelolco, towards its old men, women and children. The warriors of TLATELOLCO had acted with much arrogance :

"Axayacatl and the principal Mexican chiefs went then to look for the old men, women and children, whom they found concealed among the rushes. A large part of them were in the water up to their waists or even the chin. He said to them, ' You women, before you leave the water, must imitate the cry of the water-fowl as a testimony of respect to me.' The old women then began to imitate the cry of one kind of fowl, and young ones of another called *cuachil* or *yacatzintli*, so that one might almost fancy the water was filled with birds of that kind. Axayacatl then bade them come out of the water and set them at liberty."

In spite of the existence of these sacrifices, some traits exhibiting a very humane sentiment, were found in the religion of the Mexicans. In their idea of the future were contained three conditions of existence, which may be expressed by our Paradise, purgatory and hell, but the latter, as they conceived it, was free from physical torment ; moral pain was its only punishment. The damned were given up to their own remorse, in the bosom of eternal darkness, while the people, who had so exalted and correct an idea of the future life, surrendered themselves, in the name of religion, to the most hideous butcheries in this stage of existence. The funeral pile of other religions conceals the victim in clouds of smoke ; here the offering was an effusion of blood ; blood was poured forth prodigally, and paraded in the face of heaven, before an immense crowd. The victim was led by priests in solemn procession to the sound of music and spiritual hymns, and made to ascend the steps of the pyramid of the temple, and pass around the circumference of each of the terraces or stories into which it was divided. Above all stood the sacrificial stone between two altars, on which burned by day and night the holy fire, before a tower containing the statue of the god. The people at a distance stood in profound silence and in deep contemplation. At length, after long prayers, the victim was extended on the sacrificial stone. The priest, taking off the floating black robe, put on one of scarlet, and took into his hand a knife of *itztli*, with which he opened the breast of the victim, and tore out the reeking heart. He sprinkled with blood the statues of the god, and letting the blood flow on the earth around him, kneaded with it flour of the maize. Yet the persons who participated in these horrible sacrifices were earnestly devoted to the cultivation of flowers. These were the exhibitions which four times a day were enacted before persons who passed the greater part of their time inhaling a perfumed air, on the banks of their beautiful lake, or the fairy islands which floated on its bosom.

Many circumstances increase the astonishment caused by these practices, and compel us to think that, as we have said, they proceeded from the doctrine of expiation, interpreted with frightful atrocity. Fear is manifold more barbarous than courage. Mingled with this bloody ceremonial, the AZTECAN worship presented many traits of the purest innocence, which recall to us the worship of the Most High, by the sinless Abel. It abounded in processions intermingled with songs and dances, where the youth of both sexes, in the gayest dresses, exhibited their grace and light-heartedness. Young girls and children, with their brows bound round with flowers, made offerings of the produce of the earth, the first fruits of the season, which were placed on the altars redolent with perfumes. The victims offered in conjunction with fruits, were usually callow birds. These were the ancient sacrifices of the TOLTECS, on which the AZTECS had engrafted their sterner rites. Many of the former remained uncontaminated by the impression of the bloody hand of their successors, and contrasted strongly with the bloody imaginations of the AZTECS.

These inventions, so awful and mystic in their suggestions, were prepared with much pomp and art. Each of these sacrifices was a drama, descriptive of some passage in the career of the God to whom they were consecrated, and conveyed some moral lesson. Among others, though in this age the human mind would be revolted at some of its features, was the festival of the *new fire*, a description of which none can read without a lively impression of its grandeur, splendor, and I had almost written the grace which characterized it. A yet more striking example is that of the god Tezcatlipoca, the generator of the universe, and soul of the world.

According to the cosmogony of the AZTECS, the world had been four times destroyed. They expected yet another catastrophe at the termination of one of the cycles of fifty-two years, when all things, even the sun itself, would vanish. At the termination of the cycle, which, like the year, ended with the winter solstice, they celebrated a festival commemorative of the four occasions of the ruin of the world, and as a sort of prophecy of the fifth cataclysm of the human race, when the stars, without excepting the great focus of light and heat, should grow dimmer in consequence of the divine wrath. The five unlucky days at the close of the year were surrendered to manifestations of despair. The images of the gods, which were the ornaments and protection of their houses, like the ancient lares, were broken. The sacred fires which burned on the pyramids of each TEOCALLI, were extinguished. The domestic hearth was left unkindled, and personal appearance universally neglected. Everything

wore the impression of despair in expectation of the descent to earth of the destroying spirits.

On the evening of the fifth day, the priests taking the ornaments from the statues of their gods, marched in procession to a mountain, about two leagues distant, taking with them the noblest victim in their power. On the top of the mountain they awaited in silence the moment of midnight; when the constellation of the Pleiades, which was a prominent object in their astronomy, approached the zenith, then the victim was sacrificed. By rapid attrition pieces of wood placed above his heaving bosom, were lighted. This was the new fire, with which the funeral pile was lighted, and the body of the victim consumed. As soon as the flames of the pile were seen, cries of joy and triumph rose from the neighboring villages, from the temples and roofs of the houses, whence the eyes of an entire nation were directed with anxiety to the bursting forth of the signal of safety. From the funeral pile, couriers sped with rapidity bearing burning torches to distribute the new fire which soon shone on a thousand altars and hearths. In a short time after, the rising sun declared that the gods were compassionate to man, and that for yet another cycle, the human race need fear no destruction; but that when the new cycle should have expired they would be destroyed, if in the interim, they were not faithful to the law prescribed by the gods. The twelve or thirteen intercalary days which intervened were consecrated to festivals. Houses were repaired, and order everywhere restored; the whole people in new clothing gave thanks to the divinities.

The festival of the god *TEZCATLIPOCA* was of a different character. In the Aztecan mythology, he was represented as a being of perfect beauty and eternal youth. A year before it occurred, the most beautiful of all the captives was selected without a single corporeal defect or a scar. From that day he was treated as the representative of the god and priests, appointed to instruct him how to conduct himself with grace and dignity. He was magnificently clothed, and lived in the midst of elegance and splendor. His steps were among parterres of flowers, and he breathed the air of luxurious perfumes. When he walked abroad, which he was freely permitted to do, he was attended by pages adorned with royal magnificence. In the public places through which he often passed, he paused from time to time to play any melody which pleased him. On which occasions the crowd prostrated itself before him, as if he were the divine source of life. He led an existence of luxury and enervation, until within one month of the festival. At that time four beautiful virgins were brought to him, to whom the names of the most powerful female

divinities were given. This month he passed in luxury of sumptuous banquets, which were partaken of by his beautiful mistresses and the principal personages of the state, who appeared to contend with each other in offering to him honors due seemingly to none but the gods.

But the day of sacrifice came; pleasure vanished, and he bade farewell to his beautiful companions. One of the imperial barges bore him across the lake to the base of a pyramid, consecrated to the god. The whole nation surrounded him. He slowly ascended the steps of the *TEOCALLI*, turning, as was the custom, from time to time, towards the crowd. At every platform he cast off a portion of his glittering decorations, or broke the musical instruments on which he executed the sweetest melodies. At the top of the pyramid he was received by six priests, five of whom were clad in robes of black, with their hair floating in the wind. The sacrifice was performed, and the heart of the victim, exposed to the sun, was placed at the feet of the statue of the god. Then, from these ceremonies of terror and awe, the priests drew solemn admonitions to the people. Such, said they, was the fate of man, on whom all things in early life appeared to smile, and who afterward dies overpowered with grief and disaster; admonishing them that a single step only not rarely intervenes between the most brilliant prosperity and disaster of the darkest hue.

VIII.—OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

AFTER these details about human sacrifices, the relative position of the priesthood in Mexican society may be comprehended, and the influence they exerted, understood. When such honors are required by the gods, their servants, the organs of communication with the populace, cannot be contemned.

The Mexican clergy was numerous, rich and powerful, so that in the great temple of Mexico, the place of the worship of all the gods, in which Cortez found forty sanctuaries, five thousand priests were assembled. To every temple a glebe-land was assigned for the support of the priests, and the maintenance of its peculiar worship. Their lands were leased out to tenants with the liberality which characterized the monastic proprietors of the soil of France and Spain of that era. By degrees the greater portion of the soil of Mexico passed into the hands of the priesthood; the superstition of the emperors or their mistaken policy, induced them to favor the aggrand-

izement of the ecclesiastical domains. Under the last Montezuma, the territorial wealth of the clergy was immense. The gifts of the faithful added yet farther to their opulence. But in spite of this, the Mexican clergy was sober; the priests lived within the temples, praying frequently, practising fasts and submitting to flagellation daily. They mingled with the world, not to partake of its pleasures, but to secure their own influence. Relative to the celibacy of the priests, there are many contradictory accounts. Cortez expressly says "the priests are unmarried, and have no intercourse with women." It seems probable that men who subjected the mass of the community to such severe ordeals, must have made to its prejudices some sacrifices. But Mr. Prescott thinks otherwise. May it not be that a portion only of the clergy was restricted to the observation of so severe a requisition? This explanation of Peter of Ghent seems to explain all contradictions. Of the excess of their revenues they gave the most liberal alms conceivable, so that the prodigality of the Spanish convents almost is recalled to us. But, like the Monks of the Peninsula, they seem to have been disposed to encourage fanaticism, or at least to tolerate it. The necessity of labor appears to be the basis of all the injunctions of the liberty of the AZTECS.

They had engrossed the monopoly of education, and consequently received into their temples the children of the nobles and of the middle classes; the priests educating the boys, and the female servants of the gods, the girls. The children of chiefs remained under their control as long as they were unmarried, and until then they were designated by their long hair. Their education had many gradations, but all had a religious tendency. The girls were in their hours of leisure occupied in preparing ornaments for the altars and statues of the gods, the boys in nursing the holy fires and singing like our choristers, besides being charged with the cultivation of the flowers and the preparation of garlands, which were so frequently used in their oblations. They were initiated in the secrets of science—to read and write in the hieroglyphical characters. In schools of the higher order they were taught astronomy and astrology, and made familiar with the principles of government. The regulation of the schools was extremely strict. Falsehood was forbidden, and if a child persisted in it and could not be reformed, its lip was cloven. Manners were protected with the greatest severity.

After having sufficiently hardened the hearts of the youth, the Mexican priesthood thrust them into society, as an additional security of their own influence.

The Sacerdotal order was presided over by two priests, who were

chosen from the body of the clergy by the prince and his chief nobles. This dignity was conferred on capacity, without reference to birth. Next to the sovereign the two high priests took precedence of all the officials of the state, and were consulted in all affairs of importance.

IX. OF THE ORIGIN OF MEXICAN CIVILIZATION.

Now we can ask ourselves a question:

Whence did the civilization of Mexicans originate? We cannot answer with any certainty. About the end of the twelfth century many tribes of the same family came from the north, established themselves in the beautiful vale of Mexico, known even now by its old name Anahuac. These were the CHICHIMEQUES, a barbarous race, and subsequently the NAHUCETLAQUES in seven distinct tribes, among which were the ACOIHUES or people of Tezcuco, the Mexicans proper or AZTECS, the inhabitants of TLASCALA, of CHALCO, of XOCHILCO and the TEPANIHUES. The mysterious place whence they emanated was called by the Mexicans AZTLAN, and was far from TENOCHTITLAN in the direction of the north-west. Their pilgrimage was long and dangerous, and marked by many vicissitudes. It had been interrupted by many pauses, one of which is probably marked by the ruins on the Rio GILA, known as the *Casas Grandes* (great houses). But at length they paused when they had met with the sign the oracle had taught them to expect, which was an eagle perched on the top of a *nopal* rising from the bosom of the waves, and holding in its beak a serpent.* Here they founded their city of Tenochtitlan, which afterwards was known as Mexico, and one of the most beautiful in the world. We are told that on the shores of Nootka Sound, and in the country between the fiftieth and sixtieth degrees of latitude, tribes are found with an idiom closely resembling the ancient Mexican tongue. The bands which invaded the Mexican table land in the twelfth century, found it in the possession of races already possessed of many of the attributes of civilization, who were the heirs, though not immediate ones, of the TOLTECS, a gentle, industrious, and partially civilized people, who, as far as we can learn, had made their appearance in Anahuac about the year of our era 648, but who, four centuries afterwards, in 1051, having been decimated by the plague and famine, had emigrated yet farther south, and probably founded the cities of MITLA, UXMAL, and PALENQUE, whose ruins

* Now the arms of the Mexican Republic.

are yet found in Yucatan, having survived the injuries of time and decay; consequent on the rank vegetation of a tropical clime. The **TOLTECS** had commemorated their existence by vast buildings. To them must be attributed the group of pyramids at Saint John of **TEOTIHUACAN**, which are of clay with a revetment of stone, similar to those at Sackarah in Upper Egypt; and even, like them, divided into stories. Like the pyramids of Egypt, which, from the statues in them, we know were appropriated to religious purposes, those of **TEOTIHUACAN** faced towards the cardinal points. They were also the architects of the great pyramid of **CHOLULA**, the sanctuary of **QUETZALCOALT**, the god of the air, on the summit of which even now the traveler may see a sanctuary overshadowed by trees and attended by an Indian monk.

According to appearances, we must refer to the **TOLTECS** the majority of the useful arts and sciences known to the **AZTECS**.

We may think that Asia, the common mother of the civilization of the Old World, contributed its part to Mexican cultivation, or at least furnished contingent to the stock of religious ideas and sciences in Anahuac. Traditions which, as has been seen, bear a close resemblance to our biblical creed, appear to have reached them. The communication between America and Asia in the north-west is very practicable. Behring's Strait, which separates the two continents at the sixty-sixth parallel, is less in width than an hundred miles; and even in this narrow channel are some islands which might serve as resting-places. Without having proceeded as far north as this latitude, where in Asia are only icy deserts and savage tribes, it would be easy to pass in a canoe from Kamschatka, or even Japan, by way of the Kourile Isles, to the American shore; passing from one island to the other of the Aleutian group, and not remain at any one time more than forty-eight hours on the water. We may, moreover, remark, that a long chain of islands extends, though with greater intervening distances, from China to America. For while the Aleutian islands stretch out from America to Kamschatka, between the latter country and China, we find first Formosa, then the Leo-Keo group, the Japanese islands and the Kouriles. At that time, when the spirit of Chinese government tended rather to expansion than as now to isolation, commerce and religious propagandism may have induced men to cross this expanse of five thousand miles by a voyaging sometimes on the bosom of the deep, and again by land marches across the links of the Archipelago uniting Asia and the New World. Two hundred years before our era, the Chinese annals speak of the mystical expedition of Thsin-Chi-Houang-Ti, who sailed over the eastern

seas in search of an elixir to render certain the immortality of the *soul*. These commercial and maritime nations at that time used the mariner's compass, and it is not difficult to imagine they may have discovered the continent of America. To a civilized people, a voyage to the New World was by no means a formidable undertaking, compared with the deeds of many savage tribes on the same element. For instance, a voyage must have been made over the sea from New Zealand to Tahiti, if we pay any attention to the analogy of customs and language, and which are two thousand miles apart.

The anatomical similarity between the inhabitants of the farthest east and the indigenes of America is so close, that Humboldt has said: "We must confess that no races so closely resemble each other as the Americans, Mongols, Mantchous, and Malays." But this argument by no means suffices to show, that the inhabitants of America proceeded from Asia. Science does not *contradict* the unity of the human race according to the biblical tradition; and as soon as that is admitted, it follows almost necessarily that contiguity of location, and similarity of condition must superinduce similarity of conformation, as in the case of the vegetable productions of two neighboring islands or countries; a strong instance of which is afforded by the Fauna and Sylvæ of the two shores of Behring's Straits. But in the scientific ideas of the Mexicans, we find some points of identity with the condition of art in Asia, which compel us to admit contact to have ensued between the inhabitants of the two continents. I shall quote one example, which is perhaps the most striking instance to be met with:

The Aztecs expressed the days of their calendar by the figure of certain animals. People of Mongol origin express by animals the signs of the zodiac. Of the twelve beasts adopted in Asia for this purpose, four are found in the Mexican calendar. Three others did not exist in Anahuac, though similar ones did, by which the corresponding signs were expressed; the five other Mongol characters had no similar ones, or anything identical in Mexico, and for them, therefore, altogether different animals were substituted. And we must not forget that the Mongol signs were also used to indicate the years of the series which composed their cycles, and also to represent the days, months, and hours. In conclusion, the signs of the Aztec calendar, like the Mongol, were applied to astrological purposes, whence perhaps originated their similarity.*

* Among the Mongols, there are the leopard, crocodile, and chicken, replaced in the Mexican calendar by the Ocelotl lizard and eagle; the five other signs are

The lunar calendar of the Hindoos, constructed of yet more arbitrary signs, strongly corresponds with that of the Aztecs. If we do not recognize these circumstances as evidences of a communication between the two continents, we must have a very profound respect for the majesty of chance, as a philosophic king has said.

The inhabitants of the New World then must have had some communication with the civilized nations of Asia; some of the elements of Mexican art show this very clearly, but it would be more than rash to consider Mexican civilization as an offshoot from that of Asia. All our institutions in Europe are lineally descended from those of Greece and Rome. Without the assistance of philology, technology and the study of religion and manners, history would suffice to teach us this. By means of conquest or colonization we are all descended from the Greeks and Romans, and among us we find without any difficulty the traces of a yet more venerable origin. Between Asia and Mexico there are no such links. In civilization, descent is recognized by striking similitudes in every-day affairs. And the Mexicans brought from Asia neither the horse, the ox, the sheep, camel, nor the grain manufactured into bread. Asiatic population is everywhere nourished by rice, American by maize. Their numerical system and written characters bore no resemblance to those of Asia; as yet there have been discovered no links connecting together the languages of the two continents. Had Mexico been colonized from Asia, we could not but find countless evidences of the fact. The Chinese and Japanese have regular histories and annals, in which, in spite of what *De Guignes* says, we find no commemoration of the discovery of a continent or of intercourse with America. Neither did there exist in America any recollection of China or of India. The Mexicans, therefore, were neither descendants, colonists nor the pupils of Asia. The communication between ANAHUAC and the eastern shore of the other continents was confined to the isolated visits of a few persons, who never returned to their home, from whom the Mexicans derived some notions of astrology and traditions of cosmogony. We must believe that all the information the Mexicans ever received from the other hemisphere was second hand and already corrupted.

We are inclined, if we credit mere tradition, to think that the Mexicans received the seed of their civilization from the European, rather than the Asiatic shore of this continent. In the well established

the ox, horse, sheep and hog. The four common to both, are the hare, snake, ape and dog.

empires, found by the Spaniards in the New World, on the three table-lands of Mexico, Peru and Cundinamarca, tradition represents their ancestors to have come from the East. In Mexico, QUETZALCOATL, in Cundinamarca BOCHICA, and in Peru MANCO CAPAC, came from beyond the mountains and seas, where the sun rises; and the accounts of their personal appearance handed down by tradition correspond more correctly with the Caucasian than with any other race.

But the safest conjecture of all is, that Mexican civilization was *autochthon*. The red man found in himself the material of his religious, social and political edifice. Lofty minds, in their own recesses, or by means of one of those divine revelations, to which all who wish to trace back the origin of civilization, must attribute the first cause of every amelioration of the condition of mankind, had pointed out to their fellows the first steps in the march onwards. Though striking analogies, which have been pointed out in favor of many systems, to show that Mexican civilization arose in the Old World, may exist, and almost persuade us that it could have no other origin; though pyramids of similar colossal character exist in both hemispheres; will it not be well to suppose that we must attribute them and all similar works to the fact, that the produce of man's labor in the two worlds is similar as is his person, and, to ask ourselves if it would not seem strange, that, in similar relative epochs, in identical climates, though separated by expanses of ocean, there should not be many traits of similarity?*

To prove how easily the mind may be mistaken in the consequences drawn from similarity between the ancient civilization of America, and that of the other continent, Mr. Prescott remarks that in the funeral ceremonies of the Aztecs, we find much that recalls to us the customs of Catholic nations, as well as of Mohammedans, Tartars, and those of Greece and Rome. Must we from this fact decide that AZTECAN civilization is to be traced back to all of these nations? Is it

* Among these systems we must not forget that of Lord Kingsborough, who attempts to prove that Mexican civilization sprang directly from the Jews. To support this conjecture many plausible circumstances may be advanced; but none possessing the elements of certainty, or at all as probable as that system which attributes it to intercourse across Behring's Straits. If this system has convinced no one, it has yet been the cause of a vast historical and literary monument. Lord Kingsborough published *fac-similes* of all the Aztec manuscripts known to exist, and drawings of many of the ruins of central America—in combination with the text of the Universal History of New Spain by the Franciscan Sahagun, who lived long in Mexico. The luxurious liberality of which the British aristocracy is so prodigal, was strongly exemplified in this work.

not better to believe that it is *autochthon*, and indebted to none of the nations on either side of the continent, unless by a casual contact perhaps with both?

But how came European civilization to be engrafted on that of Mexico? What was the character, and what the incidents of the conquest of Cortez?

PART SECOND.

To a man of the nineteenth century, who is a legitimate descendant of the eighteenth, and who, consequently, in everything that he does, is but little of a devotee, an effort is necessary to understand the spirit that animated the Spanish conquerors of the New World. Men judge the morality of historical events by the ideas of their own age, and often, it is true, for the better, for we may flatter ourselves as being better initiated in our notions of eternal justice, than the generations that have preceded us for many centuries, and our scale is more exact. We are in possession of secrets which the cotemporary of those events was ignorant of; coming after him, we can perceive effects which he could not distinguish, and, in fine, we are not as he was, both judge and party. Moreover, when a man labors, not to examine the morality of actions, but simply to observe their distinguishing features, he regards them with the eyes of his era, and consequently is misled. In most instances, then, it is a panorama, where the objects are in a false light, because the observed is placed out of the proper point of view.

Religious feelings being no longer, at the present day, the instigators of conquest, we are inclined to neglect or lessen their influence in past ages. We repeat against the Spaniard the decision which the eighteenth century, inspired by its passions, and without properly understanding the matter, has pronounced against him, and we believe that the thirst for gold was the only instigator of his adventures in the New World. I do not pretend that the love of riches, the hope of great fortunes and great names were foreign to these wonderful expeditions; there are human motives in all human actions; but to the praise of our species, it is certain that always when there has been an exhibition of heroic qualities long sustained, man has obeyed noble inspirations. It is repugnant to our feelings to believe that cupidity alone has made heroes.

In Cortez and his companions there was more than a simple desire to enrich or to win rank for themselves in the Indies. As well

might we say that when France, in 1789, rose up in the cause of liberty, the sublime enthusiasm which filled the nation, and which gave it, during twenty-five years, so glorious a career, was not inspired by a profound feeling for the rights of the human race, and that the prodigies with which our country astonished the world during a quarter of a century, proceeded simply from a foolish jealousy on the part of the citizen of the advantages of the noble.

The monuments of history are sufficiently numerous and varied, to give us all the light we desire on this subject. They show us that the expeditions of the Spaniards to the New World, were made under the auspices of religious feeling. That with this sentiment were connected ideas of interest and ambition, I do not hesitate to acknowledge, any more than I would to grant that there are in man two instincts, or that the body is united to a soul. I will not go back to Columbus, who set sail in the hope of meeting and converting the grand Khan, and who, when he had seen the gold of the New World, sought for it only to assist in the expenses of a new crusade in the Holy Land; though all this did not prevent him from attaching great value to his title of Admiral of Castile, and to the material advantages attached to that title. But let us turn now to Cortez and Mexico. Cortez, like Columbus, like all the Spaniards of that age, who achieved the subjugation of the Moors, had in his soul an active and enduring faith. Imaginations were excited in the Peninsula. It was faith that had given a band of scattered cavaliers in the Asturias power to triumph over mighty caliphs. What could a man not achieve, when he fought for his faith? The natural religious ardor of that age was joined to everything which could inflame the sacred fire of patriotism. To make the infidel submit; to establish the cross in countries where the sign of redemption was not known, was the sovereign ambition, the supreme glory, the happiness without parallel of the youth who had sprung from the soil on which trod the conquerors of Grenada and of Cordova. An expedition to the New World was a crusade. War against the Indians, from the fact that they were infidels, was a holy war. To force them to confess the faith was an incomparable merit. For this prize it was of little importance whether the actor had been unbridled in his passions, whether he had been licentious, avaricious, or blood-thirsty; every sin was wiped out by so good a work, and he went guiltless to Heaven. Against the infidel (and each disbeliever was one) every means was lawful, provided you could force him to be baptized. Thus thought the many, though some of the chiefs were more enlightened and more humane.

Cortez, like all men who are really great, was a man of his own age. He partook, in different degrees, as he had courage or faith, of the illusions or prejudices of his time. His chaplain, Gomara, has preserved to us the address that he made to his troops, in a review at Cape San Antonio, at the moment of finally leaving the island of Cuba. He finished by these words—"Though they were few, they had with them the Almighty God, who never had abandoned the Spaniard in his struggles with the infidel. What matter the number of the enemy, provided they fought under the banner of the cross?" This conviction never left him, he maintained it always in presence of his companions; a good reason why they triumphed. The best means by which a man can accomplish any deed, however difficult it may be, is to persuade himself that he cannot fail. Cortez was a man of wonderful sagacity, of extreme political skill, unequaled courage, untiring vigilance, and of consummate prudence; his daring was excessive. He possessed, in a high degree, self-command, a proof of his fitness to command others. To all these natural gifts was joined an incredible good fortune; the elements and events seemed to conspire for him. But more than all this, the principal cause of his success was his faith.

In the island of Cozumel, the first land made, he could with difficulty reassure the inhabitants, whom Alvarado, his lieutenant, having landed before him, had caused to fly by the violence used to convert them. On their refusal to renounce their idolatry, he ordered his men to throw the statues of their gods from the top to the bottom of their temple, built as those of the Mexicans, in the form of pyramids. An altar was there erected in the pagan sanctuary; the Father Olmedo said mass, and the Indians, astounded that their gods had not stricken to the earth the strangers who had outraged their sanctuaries and their images, suffered themselves to be baptized. From thence they passed on to the province of Tabasco, in the peninsula of Yucatan, and discovered there a more numerous, more warlike, and more civilized people, who yet offered human sacrifices. The Indians refused to communicate with the expedition, and a battle ensued; the combat was stubborn and bloody.

A saint, mounted on a gray horse, was seen to descend from Heaven, and placing himself at the head of the Spanish cavaliers, led them to the charge. No one in the army doubted this fact; and Cortez, in the account of this affair he rendered to the sovereigns of Castile, said, "Your royal highnesses may rest assured that this victory was owing less to our forces than to the will of God, for what could we, only four hundred in number, do against forty thousand

warriors?" Terrified by the artillery and cavalry; stupefied at the audacity of this handful of men, whom they looked upon as supernatural beings, the Indians became converted. Their conversion was celebrated in the following week, on Palm-Sunday, by a pompous ceremony, and they then set sail for the Mexican provinces, where they were informed a mighty sovereign and chief of a people possessing much gold dwelt. Interviews soon took place between Cortez and TEUTILA, who governed for Montezuma the province now known as the district of Vera Cruz. Great etiquette was observed in their intercourse, as became the representatives of two mighty sovereigns, each of whom esteemed himself the greatest monarch of the universe. Montezuma was tormented by his anxiety to keep the Spaniards from his capital. He delayed their coming by informing them by his messengers, in the tone of a man accustomed to be obeyed, that it is not agreeable to him; yet as a magnificent and liberal prince, he loaded them with presents. These consisted of cotton fabrics of great beauty, of stuffs composed of feathers, (an article peculiar to the Mexicans, and in which they much excelled,) and jewels of gold and silver of great weight, and of a style equal to the material. He also sent them urns filled with gold dust, for Cortez had informed TEUTILA that his companions were subject to an affection of the heart, for which gold dust was a sovereign specific. Cortez returned these splendid presents as well as he was able, by a helmet ornamented with a golden medal, representing St. George and the dragon, by the finest Holland shirts which he possessed, (the Mexicans were not acquainted with flax), and by many kinds of beads, which would appear of great value to these people who were ignorant of the art of making glass. Through the exchange of these presents a good understanding was established; the Indians of the neighborhood brought provisions in abundance, and placed themselves under the orders of the Spaniards to relieve all their wants. Cortez continued to negotiate for permission to go to Tenochtitlan (Mexico); but in the midst of a conference the hour of vespers sounded, and he imagined the moment come, to teach the Aztecs the religious law he desired so much to give them. By his order Father Olmedo commenced a sermon in which he explained the mysteries of Christianity, and announced that the Spaniards had come to extirpate idolatry and establish the worship of the true God.

He finished by distributing little images of the Virgin with Christ in her arms. Two interpreters, the Spaniard Aguilar, who had been a captive in Yucatan, and a young Indian girl named Malincho, who had been given to Cortez by one of the caciques of Tabasco,

translated the words of the good father to the astonished Aztecs. From that moment all intercourse ceased. None of the natives presented themselves at the camp; provisions were no longer brought; and the followers of Cortez, become discontented, murmured that the expedition should return to Cuba with the magnificent presents of Montezuma.

In the meantime Cortez received a message from the chief of the Totonagues, who were settled around Cempoalla in the Tierra Caliente. Wearied with the demands of the Aztecs, this cacique asked the assistance of the wonderful strangers who launched the thunders, and who brought with them animals of irresistible impetuosity. This cacique was powerful, and boasted of having one hundred and fifty thousand warriors under his command; an extreme exaggeration, although his capital, Cempoalla, had really thirty thousand souls. To Cortez this was a revelation. This great Mexican empire was not then united and compact; a skillful policy might enable him to make way and overthrow it. The overture of the cacique was accepted with friendship. They were about to march to Cempoalla; yet, before commencing the journey, Cortez would assure himself of his personal independence. Under the pretence of a new organization, based on the independence which communities in Spain then enjoyed, he broke the bonds of apparent subordination which attached him to the Governor of Cuba, Velasquez. This revolution appeared to be nothing more than the establishment of a colony, which, by virtue of its municipal rights, selected its own officers. Some days after, they arrived at Cempoalla amid the acclamations of the Indian population. Cortez artfully compromised the cacique with the Aztecs by an affront which he determined, without the apparent participation of the Spaniards, to offer to the officers sent to collect tribute for the emperor. He then reconciled him to a neighboring people, and assured him of his protection against every one, and at the same time undertaking to convert him. The cacique proposed to marry to Spanish officers eight young girls selected from the most distinguished families of his principality. Cortez accepted the proposition on condition that they should be baptized, and intimated to the cacique that he himself must become a Christian.

The Indian wished to argue the matter, and declared that he would resist every attempt against the images of his gods, stating that if even he was rendered powerless, they would know how to avenge themselves; but the Spaniards were disgusted with this bloody idolatry, and sickened at these horrible feasts, when, at an infernal communion, they devoured their victims. They shouted with enthusiasm

when their general told them it was necessary to put an end to this; that if they bore much longer with this infernal worship, God, who only could enable them to succeed, would desert them. They followed Cortez, who, sword in hand, pointed to the temples. The cacique called his warriors to arms, and his priests, with dishevelled locks and black robes stained with blood, obstructed the path of the Spaniards. Cortez caused the chief, the principal priests, and the most renowned warriors of the Totonagues to be surrounded and seized. "You are foolish," he exclaimed; "you have no refuge but in me; for if I abandon you, the hand of Montezuma will soon fall heavy on you. It is necessary then that you obey me, and I ordain the destruction of your idols." The cacique yielded to this thought, and burying his face in his hands, cried out to Cortez to do what he wished, but that the anger of the gods would be manifested against these profane strangers. Fifty men of Castile mounted to the summit of the pyramid, tore down the wooden idols, and rolling them into the court of the temple, made of them a brilliant bonfire. At this spectacle, to the great astonishment of the natives, the heavens were still silent. The sanctuary was then purified, an altar erected, and in procession they placed on it, an image of the Virgin, decorated with flowers. Many of the priests of the sanguinary gods of the Mexicans, joined the cortege, dressed in white robes. Father Olmedo celebrated mass, and addressed the audience in language which brought tears from all the assistants. Cortez did not only satisfy his conscience, but was assured of the fidelity of the people of Cempoalla. His confidence was doubled. He set out from Cempoalla on his rout to Mexico, notwithstanding the prohibition of Montezuma, taking with him 400 foot soldiers, 15 cavaliers, and 7 pieces of artillery. The rest of the troop, under the command of Escalante, who was devoted to him, he left at Vera Cruz, as a post of observation on the sea-coast. Thirteen hundred Totonaque warriors, who kept constantly increasing, and 1000 tamanes or porters, charged with the care of the baggage, joined him. After the council with the people of Cempoalla, Cortez directed his steps through the territory of Tlascala, inhabited by a nation who had maintained in its mountains, its independence against the powerful Montezuma: like the Swiss, who, having thrown off the yoke, were in their defiles, and in the midst of their rocks, invincible against the heir of the Cesars, the Emperor of Germany. The TLASCALANS were of the same origin as the Aztecs; they spoke a dialect of the same language, possessed the same habits and customs, were addicted to the same bloody sacrifices, and were less refined: notwithstanding these points of resemblance, however, they detested the Aztecs with

a ferocious hate; they were kindred enemies. Cortez, in marching to them, had been led on by the hope of getting their assistance against the Mexican empire, but he had little dreamed of the fierceness of these mountaineers. They had refused to submit to Montezuma, because they wished to be their own masters; what probability was there that they would accept an unknown sovereign?

Here commenced for Cortez, the war of the conquest. Until then, he had not had an obstacle to his onward career, but five ordinary chiefs. It was necessary now boldly to cut loose from the Governor Velasquez, whose subordinate he was, to recruit his men and provide supplies for them; there were also in his little troop partisans of Velasquez, whom he must intimidate or reduce, to prevent them from exposing the intrigue at Vera Cruz, on account of which he had cast off his dependence on the Governor of Cuba. He had to reduce to obedience undisciplined men brought together from all parts; then again he had to put down plots—the discontent of these adventurers which he essayed to repress having engendered more than one rebellion. He had to induce his men to give up to their sovereign, without reserving anything, all the presents of Montezuma which they thought to be their own property; he was obliged to ask this sacrifice, counting on the fact that the sight of all this gold and silver would conciliate the court, would make it pass over the comedy performed by the municipality of Vera Cruz, and silence the emissaries of Velasquez; and lastly, he had to quiet the murmurs which were produced by the news of the burning of the fleet, by which they were separated from their friends, and exposed—a mere handful of men—to the mercy of innumerable and valiant enemies. I do not add to these the battles he had to gain over the inhabitants of Tabasco. With a spirit fertile in expedients, and a rude dexterity strong in that resolution which is communicative; cautious even in his daring, and, aided by the experience he had acquired, although young in the middle of an agitated life, Cortez had been able to free himself from all these embarrassments. It was, up to this time, an affair of intellectual resources and moral force. But now to contend, with arms in their hands, against these valiant TLASCALANS, who refused either to receive them or to allow them a passage, material force must be resorted to. What then was to be done? Nothing was easier for the enemy than to put into line 50,000 proved warriors; they were all ready; their defiles were easy to guard; their soil was covered with forests where ambuscades could be prepared. Local advantages and numbers were in their favor. Cortez, as we have before said, had 400 men, 15 horses, and 7 small pieces of artillery. He had also

been joined, when he entered the country of the TLASCALANS by 3000 native warriors. The TLASCALANS were commanded by a young native named XICOTENCATL, as shrewd as he was courageous. In the first battle that was fought, Cortez remained the victor with the severe loss of two of his fifteen horses. Some days afterwards a more serious engagement took place; the fight was continued during the whole day; the artillery, the horses, and the lances, made of the good steel of Toledo, worked wonders, and XICOTENCATL was forced to abandon the field, retiring, however, in good order. Cortez, whose little army contained many wounded men, sent to propose peace. XICOTENCATL, at the head of his troops, answered that the road to Tlascala should never be open to the Spaniards unless to lead them to the altar of sacrifice, and that if they remained in their camp he would seize them. On the 5th of September, 1519, a new battle was fought; the Indians were numerous and full of resentment. Cortez appealed to the faith of his troop. "God is with you: God wishes that the cross should be planted in these beautiful regions; and how can this be done if we lose ground?" The two armies engaged. Victory was yet undecided, when one of the Indian chiefs who had quarreled with XICOTENCATL, left the field with his men, and carried off with him another chief in his premeditated flight. XICOTENCATL continued the battle for four hours longer, and then retreated without being pursued. Cortez again renewed his propositions for peace. The answer was a night attack. Happily Cortez had accustomed his men to be always ready; they never quitted their arms, sleeping in order of battle, and guarded by vigilant sentinels. By good luck this night there was a moon. The TLASCALANS again failed, and Cortez sent Indians bearing words of peace, not this time to the enemy, but to the city of Tlascala itself. The proposition was favorably received. A solemn embassy set out to find Cortez. The obstinate XICOTENCATL retired to his camp and prepared to take his revenge. During this time dissatisfaction had penetrated among the Spaniards. They counted their dead and wounded men; they saw their general prostrated by fever, and in this elevated part of the country, sleeping at night under the open sky, they also suffered from cold. They said to each other that the idea of penetrating to Mexico was foolish. The party of Velasquez revived, and a deputation of the discontented presented to the general the sufferings of the army. "It may be that nature is against us," replied Cortez, "but God is stronger than nature." He quoted to them the words of an old romance, the sentiment of which was, that it was better to die with glory than to live with dishonor. The disaffected were calmed, and a short time afterwards the people of Tlascala

appeared with white flags in sign of peace, bringing with them provisions from XICOTENCATL. Joy spread through the camp. But Marina, who had observed these people closely, warned Cortez that this was only a stratagem, and that they had been sent to spy out the secrets of the troop. On being satisfied of the truth of this, Cortez sent back these emissaries to XICOTENCATL with their hands cut off. This had been done with less justice by Cesar, at the siege of Alesia, to men who were not traitors. "Tell your general," said Cortez, as he cast them from the camp "that he may come by day or night, when he pleases and as he pleases, and he will learn what we are." XICOTENCATL was seized with consternation at the sight of his mutilated emissaries. These extraordinary strangers knew then how to read his thoughts! He despaired of triumphing over the Spaniards, either by open force or by cunning, and was converted to peace. He came himself to assure them of its truth. A few days afterwards they set out together in harmony for Tlascala, where Cortez was received in the palace of the father of XICOTENCATL, and the union between them was cemented. The Spaniards did not owe their success over the TLASCALANS only to their bravery. One of the companions of Cortez affirmed that no one could be more courageous than these Indians; he frequently saw one of them defend himself against two, three, and four cavaliers. The superiority of the Spanish arms, their powder, and cannon, their admirable discipline, and ever ready vigilance, their superior tactics, and the genius of Cortez, decided their success. Their horses, a kind of winged monsters, alarmed the bravest of the TLASCALAN warriors more than the elephants of Pyrrhus did the Romans, and exerted a great influence in the battles. Cortez had singularly disciplined his men. He had inspired them with his wonderful presence of mind, and had steeled their bodies by all kinds of proofs. The persevering will of a good general operates like bathing in the Styx. By a peculiar effect of temperament, whenever a great sentiment animates the Spaniard, he possesses military qualities which you vainly seek for elsewhere. The Englishman is certainly very brave, but an English army deprived of the comforts of food and tea* is demoralized and lost. The Spaniard is above hunger, thirst, and sleep; he can support heat or cold, and can make with an empty stomach, the most unheard-of marches. The soldiers of Cortez had employment for all the resources which they possessed. I believe, however, that nothing sustained them in the same degree as the conviction that, with the cross in their hands, they were certain of an infallible and necessary triumph. Since the expulsion of

* ! *Translator.*

the Moors, they were sure that the infidel could not resist them. This was what Marina told a chief of the Cempoallans in one of the battles against the TLASCALANS; and Cortez, in his addresses to his companions, when he recounted to them the difficulties by which they were surrounded, always finished by telling them that the banner of the cross, and that alone, was sufficient to extricate them. But this strong and indomitable faith, which gave Cortez such power and success, also brought with it perils and dangers. Once, at Tlascala, he asked himself how he could tolerate the worship of these false gods around him.

His new friends and allies, on whom he counted in his enterprise against Montezuma, were idolators; they offered up human victims. and eat them with great gusto. Shall these atrocious sacrileges be suffered to continue, and shall the cross traverse the state of Tlascala without purifying it from this defilement? Happily, Father Olmedo moderated the ardor of the hero. "Everything should be done at its proper time," said he; "let us await our opportunity;" and soon in fact the occasion did present itself. The TLASCALAN chiefs proposed to Cortez and his officers to marry their daughters. Cortez answered, that it was impossible unless Tlascala were converted. He explained to them the difference of their religion from his own, and told them they were doomed to eternal perdition unless they left their dark ways. A controversy ensued, and the TLASCALAN senators alledged, in the words of a maxim often found in the mouth of the Indians, that being content with their gods, they ought to defend them; that they, the old men of the nation, would never abjure the worship of divinities who had protected their young years; that this abjuration would bring down the anger of heaven, and excite the people, and finally, that they would as leave give up their liberty as their belief, and would shed the last drop of their blood in defence of both the one and the other. After the conference, Cortez, who could ill accommodate himself to obstacles, showed signs of irritation; but Father Olmedo renewed his prayers that he would temporize. "Patience," said he; "what good will it do to violate the conscience of these people? Suppose you have the power to overthrow their altars, the idols will remain in their hearts! Let us persuade them; the work is slower, but it will be more sure." Alvarado and Velasquez de León joined their prayers to those of the charitable and better advised monk; Cortez condescended to yield the principle of religious toleration. The Spaniards observed publicly their religion, but no constraint was exercised towards the natives. A large cross was planted in the streets of Tlascala, and an altar erected, where mass was celebrated every

day; five or six young girls of the first families of the nation were baptized, and married to Spanish officers. One of them was the daughter of the old XICOTENCATL, and sister of the young general who had defended the soil of his country with such courage and perseverance. She became the wife of Alvarado, for whom the TLASCALANS entertained great admiration; and who, on account of his open and pleasing manners, his alluring boldness, and his flaxen hair, which fell in curls over his fair face, had received the name of the sun (Tonatiuh). From this marriage sprung children, who afterwards intermarried with the most noble families of Castile. It was a happy circumstance for Cortez, that the prudence of Father Olmedo, and the probably worldly views of some of his lieutenants, had cooled the ardor of his proselytism; and that they were able by their advice to bring him back to that circumspection which was natural to him. He had raised a storm that would have overwhelmed his reduced and weakened troop; and even if he had conquered the TLASCALANS, which is not probable, this exhibition of brutal proselytism would have shut out to him the road to Mexico. The whole enterprise would have failed. History would have mentioned his name as that of a partizan, who had annihilated by his fanaticism the magnificent hopes excited by his first successes. How important is a moment in the life of a great man! How important is good advice! A magnificent page in history, written in imperishable characters, in place of one of those indifferent, fugitive and obscure notices which are the lot of imprudent adventurers, and which oftentimes are the only recompense of better men, in whom nature has put the material of heroes, but who have been unfortunate! Cortez, once more restored to the path which his excellent judgment and penetration enabled him to retain, formed his plans of campaign. He determined to go straight to Mexico in spite of all opposition; and he possessed a powerful ally in the inveterate antipathy entertained by the TLASCALANS against the Aztecs. The earth was again firm under his feet, and he possessed the key to the weakness of the Mexican empire. What he learned at Tlascala, had confirmed the truth of the information given him by a cacique of Cempoalla, that a portion of the people in subjection felt the most lively hatred to their oppressors. Montezuma was detested in the conquered provinces, and a powerful liberator, who would offer to free the people from their heavy yoke, would find allies in abundance.

At the very gates of Mexico, the conqueror knew that he would find friends. The Prince IXTLIXOCHITL, brother of CACAMATZIN, the King of Tezcuco, and son of Nezahualpilli, who had been driven from the throne of Tezcuco, and reduced to an humble situation, through the

influence of Montezuma, burned to revenge himself. He was distinguished for his courage, and offered his services to Cortez. Moreover, at Mexico, the emperor had yielded to an afflicting perplexity. At bottom, generous and intelligent, this prince, after being distinguished by his bravery, had given himself up to a frightful superstition and to a bloody bigotry, to what degree we will see afterwards. It is difficult to judge what passed in his mind; we are too ignorant of the ideas of empire under which they then lived in Mexico; and superstition, with its follies, is one of those tortuous and dark labyrinths, in which it is impossible to know what course a man will take when environed by its complicated folds. If the ideas which spring from a blind superstition, associated with astrology, were not almost always contrary to the natural order of reason, the opposites of logic and good sense, we might explain the want of decision of Montezuma and the contradictions of his vacillating policy, by saying that he was ruled by his wish to conform to the prophecies which foretold the return of QUETZALCOATL, or of his descendants, and by his desire to retain empire even in spite of the envoys of that venerated god. Jealous of his sovereignty, Montezuma feared those strangers, concerning whom the most fearful accounts were brought him. Contact with these formidable beings could not fail to be fatal to his authority. On the other side, might it not be QUETZALCOATL, who, in accordance with tradition, was coming back, or had sent his children? A vague rumor had been in circulation for many years, that the solemn moment for the return of this good and powerful prince was near, and if so, what would be the result if he failed to receive the Spaniards with the greatest respect and eagerness? Threatening presages were multiplied. The astrologers predicted that calamities were impending over the empire, and without doubt to this motive is to be attributed the increase of human sacrifices offered to the gods in expiation. In the midst of his indecision, before the arrival of the Spaniards, Montezuma had called together the great council of the empire, of which the Kings of Tezcuco and Tlacopan were members.

Who were these men of an unknown race? How should they be received? Was this or not the return of QUETZALCOATL? Were they human or supernatural beings? They ought to be human; but many good reasons were given why they might be envoys of QUETZALCOATL; they came from the east; they were white and wore beards, and they were brave and invincible. Still, if they came on behalf of QUETZALCOATL, why were they enemies of the gods of the country? Some, among whom was CACAMATZIN, who, as we have before stated, had

succeeded his father, NEZAHUALPILLI, on the throne of Tezcucoc, were in favor of receiving them well; but this was not to the taste of Montezuma. Finally, the emperor attached himself to neither party. In his embarrassment he neither opened his capital to the Spaniards nor employed any force to prevent them from reaching it, but dispatched ambassadors to them. The most skillful among them, Teutila, was instructed to learn what there was in common between the Spaniards and QUETZALCOATL, and seeing upon the head of a soldier a gilded helmet similar to the one which was placed upon the image of the god, he asked that it should be given to him to be sent in great haste to Mexico as a proof. Cortez still insisted on being permitted to deliver to the emperor the message, which he pretended to have brought from his sovereign. He even accomplished more; he made friends of them while they were refusing him permission to advance. In the meantime, he was at Tlascala, among the enemies of the Aztecs. He had shown himself more formidable than they had supposed. It was difficult to refuse his demand, but by some deceit they might be able to free themselves from their embarrassments. At Tlascala, then, Cortez was met by a last embassy from Montezuma, bringing with them, as before, rich presents. This time Cortez was invited to visit the emperor, and an effort was made to prevent him from allying himself to the TLASCALANS, whom they represented as barbarians and people of bad repute. It was suggested to him to visit the capital by the rout of Cholula, alledging that extensive preparations had been made in that city to receive him. If the Spanish historians can be believed, all this was a plot prepared for him.

I shall not particularly mention the events of Cholula, though they are a remarkable episode full of horrors. I shall similarly treat the details of the march from Cholula to Tenochtitlan, though in doing so I omit a description of interesting cities and gardens, more luxurious than those of Semiramis, of mountains, whose defiles recall to us the enchanted scenes of chivalric romances. Behold him in that Venice of the mountains. He inhabited a palace built by the Emperor AXAYACATL, the father of Montezuma, at the base of the great Pyramid. This mighty mansion, composed of many separate dwellings, surrounded by one enclosure, served as quarters for the Spaniards and men of TLASCALA, who accompanied them, with the numberless attendants supplied them by the emperor. They were in want of nothing. The inhabitants of the city exhibited to them the greatest hospitality, fully satisfied of their being more than human from the feats of prowess they had achieved, the dangers they safely

passed through. They were called white gods. But this was of little importance to Cortez; he had not gone thither to enjoy the luxury of imperial hospitality. His great object was continually before him, and in this he had a vast advantage over Montezuma, harassed by a thousand uncertainties. The Aztec monarch still exerted a mighty power. The terror he excited in the minds of remoter parts of the empire was lessened, and this terror was the main source of his authority. Between CHOLULA and the capital, Cortez heard many murmurs against his empire, yet at the very gates of Mexico the Cempoallans, who till then had blindly followed Cortez, had such an opinion of the emperor's power, that they came to say he would be unable to extricate himself from the city should he offend Montezuma.

In a solemn interview with Montezuma surrounded by his court, Cortez was told that it was impossible not to recognize him and his companions as envoys from the Most High, as well on account of the feats they had accomplished as the direction whence they came. The emperor considered Cortez a descendant of the good QUETZALCOATL, the beneficent civilizer of Anahuac. The monarch in whose name he came might be that god. As Montezuma thus spoke, his eyes became filled with tears, so that the stern conqueror could not doubt his sincerity. In the succeeding days he loaded the Spaniards with presents, so that every soldier had at least two gorgets of gold. Cortez, in the interim, had carefully estimated the vast resources of the emperor. He saw how earnestly devoted to him was the countless population of TENOCHTITLAN and its environs. The violent temperament of his followers, excited by a brilliant series of victories, by the sight of measureless treasure, to which they already began to arrogate the victor's right, inspired him with anxiety, doubled by the ferocity of his TLASCALAN allies, who detested the AZTECS and were looked on with similar disgust. The TLASCALANS could not restrain the arrogance excited by their success. Above all, he was anxious relative to the answer to his messages, which he expected from Spain. Velasquez might have influence enough to effect his recall, or he might experience the envy Fonseca exhibited uniformly to all merit in the colonies. The Governor of Cuba might send out a new expedition commanded by men with the *prestige* of heroic deeds already performed. There was then no time to be lost. Montezuma was under the influence of a fascination of which he must be quick to take advantage. By such thoughts was the bosom of Cortez agitated for eight days after his entrance into the city. He had made it necessary for him to succeed, and add to the crown of Charles V. so rich a gem, that all his boldness might be pardoned. But there

was one thing more to do, and this step was the most difficult of all his career. He was now the guest of Montezuma. He must become the emperor's master. Cortez trusted himself to fortune. Montezuma would become the vassal of the Spanish monarch, and Cortez had a certain pledge of the subordination and obedience of the emperor. This pledge would be the captivity of Montezuma.

Cortez had performed many bold and daring feats, but this act was one of excessive temerity. Under pretext of perfidious conduct in a Mexican Governor, Quauhpopoca, who some time previous had ordered two Spanish soldiers to be killed, Cortez, accompanied by five or six of his most intrepid followers, went to the imperial palace, and after an interview, ordered the emperor to follow him to the quarters of the Spaniards. Montezuma refused; but was told he must do so. He offered, as hostages, his children; he was told he must come himself, and the Spaniards placed their hands upon their swords. This seemed like madness. The Imperial house was filled with guards—and the city with soldiers. Montezuma was powerful, as he had once said he had only to lift his finger to call myriads of warriors to the massacre of the Spaniards and TLASCALANS. But Cortez, with the perception of genius, understood the advantage he had over Montezuma, and perceived his personal influence was greater than the power of the emperor over his subjects. This very absolute power of the emperor, as soon as he should have him in his keeping, would be a means of advancing his own views. Montezuma, fascinated by the daring *Conquistador*, yielded, but his vanity was excessive, and he wished to accompany him as if he went willingly. His court, guards and people all obeyed his edicts blindly from old habit, and a feeling of duty, and therefore when he expressed his intention to accompany the Spaniards, they did not resist, but accompanied him to that prison, which, though irksome, he submitted to as if willingly; but when he called for his *litter*, saying that he purposed to fix himself in the Spanish barrack, the nobles, chiefs of his guard, and household looked on him with astonishment, and seemed to discredit what they saw and heard. The crowd in the streets saw him pass, and looked on the strange scene as an awful sacrilege; but no one moved. Montezuma said that he had determined to live with the Spaniards. He was received in the Spaniard's quarters with the greatest respect. His family and attendants accompanied him in his captivity.

As soon as Montezuma was in the power of Cortez, he was made to feel that if Emperor of Tenochtitlan, he was a vassal of the King of Spain. The unfortunate Quauhpopoca was tried, sentenced, and burned alive. During the period of execution, the unfortunate

Montezuma, as a guilty accomplice, was placed in irons. From that day Montezuma felt himself degraded. After the punishment of Quauhpopoca, Cortez attempted in vain to soothe him with all the exterior marks of respect. Montezuma was deeply mortified, and his influence over the people shaken to the foundation. The young King of Tezcuco, Cacamatzin, who was indebted to him for his crown, and was his nephew, expressed aloud his indignation, and undertook the organization of resistance to Cortez. Montezuma ordered him to appear before him, and was answered, that CACAMATZIN intended to appear in TENOCHTITLAN, but that it would be for the purpose of re establishing a degraded religion, and restoring to the empire its dignity and renown. That he would come with his hand on his breast, not as a suppliant, but on his sword, to exterminate the Spaniards who had brought on Anahuac such desolation. Cacamatzin persisted in his intention, but Montezuma, who was perfidious towards those who confided in him, as he was cowardly towards those who were powerful, ordered him to be seized at a conference to which he had invited him, and delivered him up to Cortez. A more yielding prince was placed on the throne of TEZCUCO. Freed from all embarrassment on this account, *el Conquistador*, acting on the principle that one concession is only a means of exacting another, demanded from the unfortunate emperor a formal recognition of the sovereignty of Charles V., and of his own power. In their first interview Montezuma had told him, if we can believe the Spanish historians, that he was disposed to own himself a vassal of the King of Spain.

All the chiefs of the empire were convoked in a species of parliament. Montezuma recalled to them the tradition of QUETZALCOATL: "You remember that this powerful god, when he left us, declared that some day he would return to resume his authority. The time is come. These white men come from a land beyond the seas, where the sun rises, and reclaim for their monarch his authority over our land. I am ready to abandon it to them. You have been my faithful vassals during the many years I have occupied the throne; you will now give me a final proof of your obedience. You will acknowledge as your master the great prince of the countries beyond the seas, and obey in his absence the captain he has sent to you. You will pay to him the tribute usually brought to me, and henceforward he will dispose of them as he pleases." At these words tears and sobs interrupted his utterance, and his illustrious companions could not suppress their emotions. Each answered that if such were his orders, he should be obeyed. Immediately after, the oath of fidelity was administered, and

a record of the proceedings drawn up by a royal notary. Spaniards, with the titles of collectors of tributes, were sent to the distant provinces. Cortez already began to make establishments in the country, and detached fifty men under the command of Velasquez de Leon, to establish a colony at the mouth of the Guazacoalco, the best port in the Gulf of Mexico, and where he expected to find a natural passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Thus within six months all was accomplished, and the dream of Cortez became a reality.

We have proceeded too rapidly ; he was but on the verge of his undertaking. The religious ardor of Cortez, long restrained, could not longer be repressed, and difficulties opened before him, compared with which his bloody contest with the TLASCALANS were but child's play. At the first interview with Montezuma, Cortez had spoken to him of his conversion. He had explained to him the Christian ideas of the creation of the world, and unfolded all the theological erudition he was possessed of. He told Montezuma he was a worshiper of Satan, and that eternal damnation would be the consequence of his persisting in it. He conjured him to "save his soul, and secure the safety of his subjects, by adopting the holy faith of Christ, and humbling himself before the cross signed with the holy price of the blood of God. Montezuma replied, that the god of the Spaniards was doubtless a great god ; that his own idea of the creation of the world was not very different from that of Cortez ; but that the gods of the Aztecs also were powerful, and had established his empire. He said he would continue faithful to them. A few days afterwards, visiting, in company with the emperor, the great temple in which were collected the sanctuaries of all the gods, Cortez, at the sight of the human blood which stained them, thus addressed the emperor. "How can so glorious and powerful a prince adore these idols, which are but representations of Satan? Ah, would you but permit me to erect here the cross, and images of the virgin and her son, you would then see what would become of these abominable gods." "Those gods," said Montezuma, "have always led the AZTECS to victory. They send us the seed time and the harvest, and had I known you would not treat them with respect, I would not have admitted you into their presence." This scene took place before the captivity of the emperor. Father Olmedo, who was present, soothed the temper of Cortez, and soon temporal cares occupied all the attention of the great captain. But as soon as Montezuma submitted to acknowledge Charles V., the religious zeal of Cortez became more impetuous. "If I have done much for the Spanish crown," said he, "what have I done for the holy faith? Must it be said, that human sacrifices continue to be offered up in this city of his Catholic majesty?"

Followed by his principal officers, Cortez entered the private rooms of the emperor, and asked that the great temple be surrendered to the Spaniards for the worship of the Almighty, and that the Mexican people be invited to participate in the benefits of the religion of Christ. "But, MALINTZIN," replied the frightened emperor, "your demands are so outrageous that the anger of the gods will be excited; and my people will rebel before they will suffer their temples to be profaned." And, in truth, religion is the last institution which a people will suffer to be profaned, and as long as a nation believes its religion to be true, it will sooner part with its nationality and independence than with it. After a conference with the priests, Montezuma declared that one of the sanctuaries of the great temple would be relinquished to him. An altar was erected and mass celebrated with great pomp, by Fathers Olmedo and Diaz, while the next sanctuary, that of the god of war, echoed with the groans of the indignant AZTECS.

From this day everything in Mexico wore an altered aspect. Until then Montezuma had been affable to the Spaniards. He was delighted with the society of some of them, and amused himself among them, always leaving them tokens of his munificence. He now became moody, avoided them, and passed his time among the most distinguished AZTECAN warriors and priests. The people could scarcely restrain their animosity, their pride being every day mortified. The emperor sent for Cortez, and told him that the gods had informed his priests of their wrath, and demanded, under penalty of the severest punishments, that the Spaniards should be expelled. "You have no chance of escape," said he, "but in retreat. Return to your homes, and you may be safe." Cortez, with great *sang-froid*, replied, that he was willing to leave the country, but that to do so, he must have vessels. Under the direction of Martin Lopez, a fleet was begun at Vera Cruz; but Cortez took care that everything should be done with as little haste as possible. In the mean time the whole capital assumed a melancholy and angry look. The Mexicans prepared for attack, the Spaniards for defence; at the first pretext swords would be drawn.

All at once they learned that a fleet had appeared at Vera Cruz. It was large, and manned with Spanish soldiers. Their number was nine hundred, of whom eighty were cavalry, and as many arquebus men, four times as numerous as the Castilians who were with Cortez in the city. At this news the Spaniards were delighted, and cried aloud with joy. They were safe. Vain illusion! this was the most dangerous blow aimed at Cortez. This expedition came from Cuba, having been organized by Velasquez to overturn the pedestal of the statue

Cortez had erected for himself in the temple of fame. From *la villa rica de la Vera Cruz*, Cortez had dispatched two of his officers to Spain with the sumptuous presents he had received for the emperor from Montezuma, and had cautioned them not to touch at Cuba. But one of them, owning property there, could not resist so strong a temptation to visit it, and through him the whole island had learned the *el dorado* so unexpectedly discovered by Cortez. The anger of Velasquez was excessive. He exhausted all his resources, to fit out an expedition Cortez would not dare to resist, and which would suffice to conquer the mighty Mexican empire. This was the expedition about to disembark at Vera Cruz, commanded by Narvaez, an officer of well-known courage.

Cortez soon decided. With seventy Mexicans he left Mexico, placing Alvarado in command of the rest of his men, and advising him to be prudent and cautious. On his way he ordered to join him the hundred and fifty men he had detached to establish a colony on the banks of the Guazacoalco, and marched directly to meet Narvaez, who kept by no means a rigid watch. He managed to communicate with his soldiers, distributed warily gold among them, promised brilliantly, and luckily took Narvaez prisoner in a night attack, when he induced him to believe he had an overpowering force. All the companions of Narvaez, astonished at the wonders he had accomplished, and corrupted by his brilliant promises, placed themselves beneath his standard, and Cortez returned to Mexico on the 24th of June, 1520.

On his entry the city seemed almost deserted. Scarcely an AZTEC hailed his triumphant return; on the whole lake beside the long causeway, there was not one canoe seen. The reason was, that Alvarado had added yet another grief to the religious indignities of the AZTECS. By an act of the foulest perfidy he had murdered a majority of the youthful nobles while celebrating the festival of the god of war, probably to obtain possession of the valuable ornaments they wore. The number of Alvarado's victims was six hundred. As soon as Cortez entered his quarters he was besieged. He had taken precaution to build two brigantines as a means of escape over the lake, but the enraged people had burned them. A furious siege of the Spaniards began. A cloud of arrows continually fell on the palace of AXAYACATL, which was their fortress. They returned it with artillery and musketry, which made terrible breeches in the serried ranks of the AZTECS. But what of that? The assailants were innumerable, and died willingly if their lives purchased the death of a *child of the sun*. Cortez made sorties in which he always had

the advantage, but he did not continue the less closely blockaded. The terraces of the houses were covered with soldiers; the bridges of the canals which bisect the streets were torn away. "You are ours," cried the Aztecs, "and the sacrificial stone is prepared; the knife of the priest is sharpened. The beasts of the menagerie growl with eagerness for your blood, which at last will flow to delight our god HUITZILOPOTCHLI. We have cages in which we shall fatten the caitiff children of ANAHUAC (the TLASCALANS) who are with you, that they may be worthy of sacrifice." "Speaking thus," says Bernal Diaz, "they fought so bravely that many of us who had served in France and Italy, against the *giants* of those countries, or in the Levant against the Turks, declared they had seen no people fight like the Indians. The brother of Montezuma commanded the siege, and distinguished himself by his intrepidity. Luckily Cortez was not easily intimidated. He had a body of iron and a soul of bronze. He hoped by means of this constant carnage, the Indians would be forced to yield. He attempted to frighten them with warlike machines of the most formidable kind. He tried negotiations, and made use of Montezuma as a mediator. The unfortunate emperor appeared in great pomp on the terrace of the Spanish quarter. At his appearance the crowd, used to obey, bowed itself. 'Are you come to rescue me?' said he, with the calm tone of a man used to obey; 'if so, I am no prisoner. I remain here among the white men, who are my guests. Are you come to compel them to leave? If so, they are about to do so voluntarily.' The terms of friendship used by Montezuma towards the Spaniards, excited anew the rage of the populace; as soon as he had called himself the friend of the hated strangers, he became a traitor to his country and the gods. A volley of stones and arrows was directed against him, and being wounded by one of them, died in consequence a few days after."

This event satisfied Cortez that his enemies would not submit. Besides, his provisions were exhausted, and only one course remained for him to adopt; to cut a passage through. But to extricate himself he must pass through long streets, every house of which was a citadel with terraces covered with projectiles and men. Beyond the streets were long causeways across the lake, on the sides of which were boats loaded with armed men. To render themselves surer of their prey the Mexicans had destroyed the bridges, erected barricades, and broken even the causeways. Yet Cortez, in a night march, reached the *terra firma* beyond the causeway of TLACOPAN, the shortest of the three. But what a night was that? In the stories of the *Conquistadores*, and Spanish histories, it is known as *la noche triste*.

Cortez lost one-half of his army. All who had encumbered themselves with booty perished or were made prisoners. All the artillery was taken by the AZTECS, to whom, however, it was useless from the lucky fact that it had been forbidden to teach them the secret of manufacturing powder. The greatest bravery had been necessary to accomplish even what they had achieved, to escape from the city. The women, even, fought heroically. Two of the Spaniards distinguished themselves—especially the general and Alvarado, whose valor the Aztecs even applauded. They had preserved all who were saved. Alvarado had reached a place in the causeway where the bridge was broken. The horsemen locked together, threw themselves into the breach, and carried over a great portion of the foot, but he alone remained on the other side to beat back the pursuers. It seemed that he could not escape, when, leaning on his long lance, and bracing himself on it with all his strength, he leaped over the interval and landed among his countrymen. Struck with amazement, the AZTECS cried out that he was a veritable *child of the sun*. The leap of Alvarado has been commemorated, and amid all his exploits, has been selected to preserve his name. The second in command of Cortez, the conqueror of the kingdom of Quiché, is designated in chronicles as ALVARADO OF THE LEAP.

Once on the main land, Cortez was attacked by an army which he conquered, when, like Cesar at Munda, he thought that at Otumba he was defeated, and that nothing was left except to die with glory. Then he proceeded to TLASCALA to recruit and rest his army, and prepared to return with new forces to TENOCHTITLAN. I shall not speak of the course he adopted to render himself sure of the fidelity of the TLASCALANS; of the expeditions he made to nations whose fidelity had been shaken by the event of the *noche triste*, of the alliances he contracted and treaties he made, of the discontents and cabals which arose among his Spanish followers. The series of events and prodigies seems almost miraculous. I shall not speak of the embassy sent to TLASCALA from TENOCHTITLAN, to concert a league of all the nations of Anahuac to expel the cruel strangers, enemies of gods and men, or of the debates in the TLASCALAN senate relative to this matter. Yet it is as noble as the best scenes handed down to us of the Roman senate. Let us proceed with Cortez to Mexico, before which he appeared at the head of a large auxiliary force, whose armament he rendered perfect, and whom he subjected to severe discipline. A flotilla of three brigantines was to operate from the lake on the city.

The brother of Montezuma, who succeeded to the empire, died after a reign of four months, of the small-pox, which had been introduced

into the country by the soldiers of Narvaez. In his place, GUATIMOSIN, a nephew and son-in-law of Montezuma, was chosen, a young man of twenty-five years of age; of established courage, of remarkable intelligence and great beauty, who, like Hannibal against the Romans, had vowed an irreconcilable hatred to the Spaniards. Cortez, who fully appreciated his difficulties, and neglected nothing to insure his success, established a code of regulations, obedience to which he positively enjoined. This body of regulations has been preserved. The great object of his expedition, which he was careful to inculcate on his soldiers, was the conversion of the Pagans; this was the secret of their strength and success. "On any other terms," says he, "our war is unjust, and all the benefit we can acquire from it will be wealth won with crime." Blasphemy, gambling, etc., were forbidden under severe penalties. One might have called it a crusade and company of adventurous knights, and Cortez supposed it such, and himself a Godfrey of Bouillon. On the other hand the priests, who exerted a great influence over GUATIMOSIN, preached to the AZTECS that no compromise with the Spaniards was possible; that they must either conquer or die. As in the *Girusalemme liberata*, Heaven is unfolded both as a Pagan Olympus and a pit of fallen angels. As in the *Iliad*, men think the inhabitants of realms above participate in their quarrels. This, at least, happened to the Spaniards, who believed that the Virgin Mary appeared in the air, and that their patron Santiago charged in their ranks on his spotless charger of white, together with St. Peter, the patron of Cortez.

On each side there was a countless host, for Cortez had one hundred and fifty thousand auxiliaries; on each side there were great valor and ardor. The AZTECS defended themselves as a people, fighting *pro aris et focis*, fights always. The Spaniards, like those who fought under the commands of gods, or like ambitious men who fight for honor and fame. The Indian auxiliaries strove to gratify old enmities and be revenged for long oppression. They wished to annihilate the cruel masters who so long tyrannized over them. More than once the victory was doubtful, in spite of the ferocious valor of the TLASCALANS, and the deep determination of the Prince of TEZCUCO, IXTLIXOCHITL. The intrepidity of the handful of Spaniards, and personal bravery of Cortez, everywhere won success, but at a dear price. They fought on the lake as well as on the water, at a distance, and hand to hand, by day and by night, on the platforms of the pyramids, the terraces of the houses, and the thick ooze of the lake. Stratagem and audacity were made use of, and often the cunning of GUATIMOSIN endangered the *conquistadores*. In *la noche triste*, Cortez had undergone great

peril. In the attack of XOCHIMILCO (*the field of flowers*), one of the cities of the valley, he was for a few minutes a prisoner. All had been over with him, but for the disposition of the AZTECS to reserve him as an ultra-solemn sacrifice; a TLASCALAN and two of his own attendants rescued him. On the next day, he sought for the TLASCALAN to reward him; but vainly: he could not be found, and it was believed by the army, that Saint Peter under this disguise had rescued the general. During the siege of Mexico, Cortez, at the very eager solicitation of his companions, determined on a certain day to make a general assault. "We are left," said the soldiers, "exposed to all the inclemencies of the season, a prey to famine, while the city of pagans could so easily be carried by a *coup de main*. Did we not long since, by main force, penetrate into the very heart of the city, to the palace of the emperor, and the temple where Satan is adored under the name of the infamous idol HUITZILOPOTCHLI? Did we not set fire to their infamous sanctuary, and throw to the base of the pyramid the guilty priests who presided over it? Lead us to the assault." "Be it so," said Cortez, alarmed by the general murmurs. Two columns of attack were formed, the one commanded by Alvarado, the other by Cortez; after mass they were moved forward. Cortez subdivided his column into three bodies, and advised the chiefs to be circumspect. The AZTECS retreated, but fought valiantly; the Spaniards, conducted by the treasurer Alderete, (all the men of that expedition were heroes,) by Andres de Tapia, and the brother of Alvarado, pressed them warmly. They had reached the centre of the city, and victory seemed within their grasp. Suddenly, from the top of a TEOCALLI, the horn of Guatimozin was heard. At once the flying Indians turned, others concealed within the houses showed themselves on the terraces; the cross streets were filled with warriors; men rushed from the willows on the banks of the lake, and attacked the Spaniards and their allies with fury. Disorder seized every rank, and the artillery became useless; all was a frightful *mêlée*. Many Spaniards were killed or taken. Cortez himself wounded, was seized by six athletic men, who, seeing him alone, cried out, "Seize Malintzin! seize him," and rushed on him. He was again rescued from them, but the horn of GUATIMOZIN, which seemed powerful as that of *Astolfo*, again sounded, and the impetuosity of the Aztecs returned. They threw at the feet of Cortez the heads of many Spaniards, crying: "There is *Tonatiuh*! (this was the name given to Alvarado;) there is Sandoval! (the bosom friend of Cortez.) Against the column of Alvarado they threw other heads, saying, there was Malintzin. Fortunately, neither the general nor Alvarado, nor Sandoval had fallen; but the Spaniards were routed, and reached their entrench-

ments with great difficulty, and at night, could not, without terror, behold the awful ceremony enacted on the great Teocalli. Their companions, who were prisoners, were immolated before the statues of the gods, and the bloody corpses thrown amid a mob which strove eagerly to devour them.

This victory of Guatimozin excited the greatest enthusiasm among the AZTECS, and the nations which had remained faithful to them. The priests proclaimed that the gods, satisfied by the sacrifice of the Spanish prisoners, had promised to free the country from the intruders, and that within eight days this would be accomplished. At this intelligence, the allies of the Spaniards became terrified. They deserted in large numbers, not to the AZTECS, whose indignation they feared, but to return home. But Cortez watched his camp rigidly. The sorties of the besieged were repulsed, and the Spaniards had lost nothing except the services of a few marauders. The allies, seeing that the oracle had erred, returned to the Spanish camp. The ardor of the besieged grew cold, and they found themselves face to face, with scourges by which they had long been threatened—famine and diseases engendered by misery, and a too dense population. From exaltation they passed to despair; they saw their old vassals demolish the parts of the city of which Cortez had possessed himself, and level to the ground its edifices.

Cortez, who understood their situation, sent to Guatimozin three chiefs he had made captives, and besought him to submit, promising to leave him in possession of the crown; and that the AZTECS should retain their possessions and dignities under the sovereignty of the King of Spain. The young prince received the envoys with distinction, and heard respectfully their commission. Probably because he was not fully authorized himself to act, he referred them to a council composed of the principal military chiefs, and most distinguished of his subjects. Some advised that the proposition of Cortez should be accepted, but the priests who understood that, under the government of the Christians, their influence was lost, interposed. "Peace," they said to the emperor, "is a great blessing except with the whites, violators of every promise, of limitless avarice, and ever offending the gods. Let us confide in the gods who have ever been protectors of our nation. Is it not better to die, than live the slaves of those false and wicked men?" The courage of GUATIMOZIN was restored, if it had ever wavered, by their eloquence, and he said, "Well, we will die on the field of battle; woe to him who shall speak of surrender." As an answer to the message of Cortez, after the expiration of two days, Guatimozin ordered a general sortie, which was unsuccessful. The Aztecs were beaten back, and shut up in a few quarters of

the city. Famine became more oppressive to them; they supported themselves on lizards and rats; they searched for reptiles and insects, and gnawed the barks of the trees, and during the night searched for roots. In the meantime, Cortez, who had no other means of subduing them, continued the work of destruction, though with great unwillingness. Pyramids and palaces were torn down, as well as the huts inhabited by the populace. The work of ruin was carried on by the allies, to whom the AzTECS cried out, "Wretches, the more you tear down, the more you will be forced to rebuild; for should we conquer, our capital must be restored to its prior magnificence. If the white men succeed, they will demand not less than we." In spite of the presence of innumerable difficulties, the brave AzTECS kept up their courage. They replied with *hauteur* and disdain when told they had no provisions. One of the chiefs attached to Cortez, remonstrated with them relative to their awful condition, at one of the conferences, which were so frequent between the assaults and sorties. They threw *tortillas* in his face, saying they yet had enough for themselves and their soldiers.

But famine and disease decimated them. Cortez saw them pale and thin wandering about the terraces and barricades, as street after street was wrested from them; they were found full of bodies evidently victims of famine. Careful as they were to pay punctually every funeral honor in happier days, now all were neglected. In the houses famished women and children were found, scarcely able to drag along their bodies; for all able to move, of course took refuge in the yet unconquered quarters of the city. In this sad state they yet reproached the Spaniards that they did not terminate the contest. "Ye are not children of the sun, for he is rapid in his course, while ye are slow and languid. Be quick, that we may rejoin our God HUITZILOPOTCHLI, who will reward us for all we have suffered on his account." At other times they insulted; they said they would look in vain for treasures; that all their gold was concealed where it could never be found. Cortez, having sent a prisoner of high rank to GUATIMOZIN, to induce him to surrender, the unfortunate envoy was sacrificed.

But at length the AzTECS were shut up within a single quarter, the smallest of all, and only about an eighth of the area of the whole city, without a sufficient number of buildings to shelter them. Many remained both by day and night in the open air in boats, and among the rushes of the lake. Every day Cortez had fresh proof of the misery of their situation. For some time they had subsisted on the prisoners made in their sorties. This resource even they were de-

prived of. Men were taken at night seeking for offal which at other times they would have disdained, or attempting with their nails to dig up a handful of roots. Mothers were said to have murdered and devoured their own children. An epidemic caused by the miasma with which the atmosphere was filled, decimated those who had escaped from famine. Cortez pitied them; he gave orders to cease all acts of aggression. How could he make himself obeyed by the ferocious TLASCALANS, the former vassals of the AZTECAN empire, who strove to revenge themselves for the great oppression they had suffered? He strove again to induce GUATIMOZIN to submit. At the instance of his chiefs, the young monarch at last consented to an interview. They were to have met in the vast market-place, where Cortez, under a rich canopy, had prepared a magnificent banquet, and wished to invite his enemy to satisfy his hunger. At the appointed hour Guatimozin did not come, but sent a message by the chiefs who had been sent to him by Cortez, excusing himself. The cause of this may have been that he feared *el Conquistador* wished to get him into his power, and that the fate of Montezuma, who had been a passive instrument to effect his own overthrow, appeared the greatest of all misfortunes; or it may be he was prevented by the influence of the priests. The *Conquistador* made all the AZTECS who had met him, satisfy their hunger, and, with provisions, sent another invitation for Guatimozin to meet him. The proud GUATIMOZIN sent back other presents in return; the same persons returned to the Spanish camp bearing cotton cloths, but without the emperor. Cortez again pressed an interview with such success that a promise of Guatimozin to visit him at noon, was made. He was again disappointed, and saw with regret, that the besieged prepared silently to defend their last stronghold. On the next day there was a massacre, rather than a fight. The allies of Cortez slaughtered forty thousand AZTECS, without sparing age or sex. Their fury excited the indignation of Cortez, who, writing to his master, said: "The cries of the children and women who were murdered remorselessly, were so frightful, that the hearts of each of us was moved. . . . Never have I seen such cruelty," (he spoke of the allies.) Yet on the next day Guatimozin refused to treat with the Spanish leader.

This took place on the 13th of August, 1521. This was the last day of an empire, which but three years before was so flourishing. Before giving the orders for a final attack, Cortez invited the emperor to appear. The messenger returned with the CIHUACOATL, a magistrate of the first rank, who declared with an air of consternation that GUATIMOZIN knew how to die, but would not treat. Then turn-

ing to Cortez, he said, "Do what you choose." "Be it so," said Cortez; "return to your friends and say they must die." The troops advanced. There were a final *mêlée* and carnage on the lake, and in the city. The exhausted Mexicans, in their despair and devotion, looked for strength for a final contest. Guatimozin, driven to the banks of the lake, with a few warriors entered a boat, and sought to escape, but a brigantine of the Spanish flotilla pursued him, by which he was captured and taken to Cortez, who received him with all the respect due to a king. Advancing with dignity on the terrace prepared for the sad interview of a captive king with his conqueror, he said, "I have done everything in my power, MALINTZIN, to preserve my crown and people. You see how I have fallen, and you can do with me as you please." Then pointing to the poignard at the *conquistador's* girdle, he said, "Draw it and finish with me." "No," said Cortez, "you shall be treated with profound respect. You have defended your capital like a gallant prince, and Spaniards know how to honor the valor even of an enemy." He then ascertained where was the empress, a daughter of Montezuma, and sent an escort for her. He ordered a meal to be prepared for the august consorts. The AZTECAN empire had ceased to exist, and the Spanish rule was established in Mexico. The cross was raised over this beautiful country, in which it was allowed to have no rival.

When we look at the conquest of Mexico under political and religious aspects, it presents features of great interest, but in other points of view also it is interesting. We seem in its history to read an epic poem or chivalric romance. So vast and stupendous are its incidents and events, the men appear gigantic, and the miraculous enters into its composition. To form an idea of the grandeur of the events, we have only to retrace what was achieved. An adventurer, who left Cuba with 553 soldiers, 110 sailors, 16 horses, 13 arquebuses, 32 arbalets, 10 cannon, and 4 falconets, dares to attack an empire evidently populous and brave, whose sovereign was feared by every one, and had among his vassals 130 tributaries, each of whom could bring into the field 100,000 armed men. Cortez not only compelled it to recognize as its sovereign, his master Charles V., but to abandon its religion, the greatest sacrifice a people can be called on to make. He willed it, dared to attempt it, and succeeded within the space of thirty months.

Compared with such a subject, the theme of the Iliad seems small and uninteresting. What indeed is the subject of the great poem of Homer, but the restoration of a good understanding between Achilles

and Agamemnon, without any crisis, for it results in nothing, in which the leader of the defenders of Troy is conquered by the bravest of the Greeks. The *Æneid* is not constructed on the largest scale. Two chiefs of tribes, *Æneas* and *Turnus*, with nearly an equal number of followers, contend for the hand of the daughter of the King of Latium. In each of these two *chefs d'œuvres*, the poet has drawn, upon his own resources for the miraculous, and the rich embroidery of adventure. In either case it was necessary to strew over the true history, geographical and historical ideas, far in advance of those of the author's age. On this account the *Iliad* and *Æneid* are, as it were, encyclopedias of two epochs important in the annals of the human race, written in the most admirable form by men of rare genius and information. They present an animated picture of thoughts and faith, knowledge and habits of life, of manners and arts of the two great people from whom our civilization is sprung, and with whom we feel ourselves united as if by the umbilical cord. Consequently they take hold of our feelings, and remain immortal monuments, which will remain in all vividness so long as the civilization of the West of Europe shall last. And this civilization is not likely to terminate, uniting as it does Rome and the Empire of Japan. The *Girusalemme liberata* records the shock of two masses of great but almost equal power. The truth there triumphs, because it is the truth; a just conclusion, doubtless, but one which the reader foresees, and which destroys in him all enthusiasm. It was in vain that care was taken to mingle with it much of the marvelous; the poem was not wonderful. Nothing can in point of intrinsic value of result be compared with the conquest of Mexico, except that of Asia by Alexander, or the foundation of the Portuguese power in India. In each of these two instances there was a marked disproportion between the respective powers. The smaller triumphed over the greater. The force of genius was revealed in all its splendor; by a sublime effort, man passed beyond the sphere to which he is ordinarily limited, and accomplished miracles.

If the conquest of Mexico, considered as a whole, is surprising, its details are no less so; we know not what to admire in this brilliant succession of incidents, for everywhere astonishment springs forth from its details as light does from a diamond, as dazzling lustre emanates from purple and gold. Shall we decree the highest praise to the prompt decision which induced the conqueror to burn the fleet, that he might insure conquest or failure to himself, or to the daring which prompted him to arrest the emperor in his palace? Shall we decree the palm to the campaign against Narvaez or to the battle of Otumba,

where Cortez, with his numbers reduced to a mere handful, nearly routed and without artillery conquered the Mexican forces, maddened with the success of *la noche triste*, and in the hour of his victory killed the Mexican general. Where, in history or romance, is there such an event recorded as his combat on the platform of the great **TEOCALLI**, where the two parties precipitate each other from declivities 120 feet high? But look yet more closely into the detail; everywhere you will find deeds which recall to you the days of chivalry. Look at the leap of Alvarado, and the daring of those young Mexicans, who take each other by the hand, and rush down the grand pyramid with the hope of bearing Cortez with them, willing to die if they can thus destroy the enemy of their gods and country. And look at the daring of the five soldiers who go to gather sulphur in the crater of **POPOCATEPETL**, when, for want of that mineral, the army is without ammunition for their artillery. They are not sure, but suspect the volcano produces sulphur. Five men volunteer to ascend it. No one attempted it from that time till 1827. After labor of many days, they reach the summit in spite of the lava and ashes, of the blinding glare of the snow, and the excess of cold. They look into an abyss of 1000 feet, in the depth of which they see a blue flame, with which are mingled poisonous vapors. They cast lots to decide who shall venture to descend. The chief of the small band, Montano, is the one the fates select. They place him in a basket fastened to a cord, and lower him. After a descent of 400 feet he carefully collects the sulphur, and returns as if he had done nothing more extraordinary than strolling through the gardens of Sevilla or Cordova.

In this drama a variety of strongly defined characters appear. I do not say that they are equally so with those of the *Æneid*, for this expression would be too feeble, but with those of the *Iliad* itself. He, whom the **AZTECS** called *Tonatiuh*, (the sun,) on account of his lofty stature and his long golden hair, *Alvarado del Salto*, with the colossal figure of the lofty Ajax, the valor of the son of Tydeus, the daring of the other Ajax, pauses at nothing, not even at sacrilege. By the side of this terrible figure we love to look at the young and heroic Sandoval, whom Cortez calls his son, and who is to him a *fidus Achates* or Patroclus. But he far surpasses the friend of *Æneas* or the son of Menætius. He commands admiration by his energy and courage. He is interesting on account of admiration he inspires in and receives from Cortez. After an assault, in which the Spaniards had been repulsed by Guatimozin, he left his tent to visit the head-quarters of Cortez, whom the **AZTECS** boasted to have slain; he passed on his horse, worn by the toils of a hard-fought battle, a field thronging

with his enemies, through which every reader follows him with such an interest as Tancrede and Rinaldo rarely excite. Christoval de Olid, who afterwards proves a traitor to his leader, Velasquez de Leon, Avila, Quiñones, Tapia and Escalante, may surely be compared with Idomeneus, Philoctetes, Merion, Menelaus, Antilochus and Menestheus. The cowardly Thersites, the scandal-monger of the Iliad, finds his equal among the conspirators who surround the general and attempt his life, or among the followers of Narvaez, who, loaded with booty, attempt their escape, and try to effect a safe return to Cuba. The Father Olmeda, a clergyman of enlightened faith and true charity, who restrains the eager *propagandism* of the Spaniards, is more human and interesting than the inanimate Calchas. Who would exchange the watchful pilot Alaminos for the sleeping Palinurus? The leader of all, Cortez, to the inflexible majesty of the great Agamemnon, and the high qualities of command which distinguish the king of kings, adds the impetuosity of Achilles and the skill of Ulysses, ever fruitful in expedients and artifice.

Among the Indian auxiliaries we distinguish the Prince of TEZCUCO, IXTLIXOCHITL, brave and faithful to the side he has selected, who, often called a traitor by the AZTECS, ever refutes the charge by deeds of almost incredible daring; and XICOTENCATL, of Tlascala, a hero yet more complete, who is constantly molested and mortified by the reproaches of the Aztecs, and a suspicion that the Spaniards are come to enslave all the red men. These, too, strangely contrast. How different, too, are their fates? The one becomes cacique of TEZCUCO; the other dies on the scaffold as a deserter, because, during a siege, he left their ranks in disgust, and took refuge in the mountains—a terrible example Cortez thought necessary to hold up to the new vassals of his master, that they might fully comprehend their new duties, and the dangers of disobedience. Another chief of the TLASCALANS, the aged MAGISCAZIN, by his prudence and fidelity, and by the energy with which, when the envoys of the AZTECS had almost persuaded the TLASCALAN senate to abandon Cortez, then a refugee and exile, he persuaded it to be true, resembles Nestor, faithful to the gods when he saw the Greeks retreat before Hector. He argued with Cortez as the King of Pylas would have done, of the truth of the religion of his fathers.

The characters of the Mexicans are not less strongly defined. Hector does not make Guatimozin seem diminutive, and we would trust ourselves rather in a city defended by him than to the ægis of the son of Priam. At the age of twenty-five, this prince, the last emperor of the Aztecs, bursts forth in heroic greatness and splendor at the

moment when an opposition to oppression is to be organized: of unimpeachable bravery, he shows himself familiar with all the stratagems of war. In disaster his resignation appears sublime. On the brazier on which Cortez, to satisfy the avidity of his companions, had placed him to make him reveal where he had concealed his treasures, which he had not done, because he had no more to conceal, he continues a monarch. He dies like a king, when *el Conquistador*, led astray by false news, during a long and painful campaign in the Isthmus of Honduras, destroys him. The brother of Montezuma, CUITLAHUA, brave and intelligent captain and warrior, and devoted patriot, is more interesting than Agenor or Æneas. Among the other Trojan chiefs, none is more interesting than the cacique of Tezcuco, CACAMATZIN, when he receives with indignation the order sent him by Montezuma to obey the Spaniards. And among the Aztecs there was no Paris to retreat unworthily, for every one died in his harness.

Montezuma himself, the unfortunate Montezuma, is not cast in a common type. Liberal and generous even to prodigality, elegant almost to the verge of effeminacy, royally affable, his mind too is highly cultivated. In his youth he had been brave, and belonged to the order of Quachictin, who were the bravest of the brave. By degrees, however, he fell under the influence of an imbecile bigotry. He believed that the astrological signs and ancient prophecies of his nation demanded him to submit to the Spaniards. With an inconceivable contradiction, which reveals much weakness of mind, superstition effaced in his heart the feeling of patriotism, and made him basely yield to those whose avowed object was the destruction of his religion. Vainly the love of country, the sentiment of ambition, and the passion of power, so fascinating to any one who has once enjoyed it, united to arouse him; he could find in his mind nothing but the debased cunning of a Greek of the lower empire. Mr. Prescott has somewhere compared him to Louis XIV., and in doing so has greatly wronged the French monarch. If Louis XIV., like Montezuma, was so luxurious as to neglect his subjects, he had the excuse of great age; he suffered himself to be influenced by false ideas so as to revoke the edict of Nantes, an event in the history of France to be ever regretted and lamented. It is true that the predominating trait of his mind continued always to be love of country. He ever felt himself the representative of nationality, and as such, under the necessity of never bending his head; and on the eve of the day of Denain, when the fortunes of France were at stake, his words to the *audacious* Villars were sublime. While alive, no mortal could have ironed him. However good in other respects they may be, characters with-

out decision play a contemptible part in history. Of these was Montezuma. Louis XIV., on the contrary, was always distinguished for his resolution. Thus it was that he established a great monarchy, and founded a political system, while Montezuma suffered his empire to crumble away beneath him.

The women are not wanting in the epopea of the conquest. There, it is true, there is neither a noble and touching Andromache, nor a gentle and tender Iphigenia, nor a melancholy Hecuba, nor inconsolable Dido. Yet the character of the young and beautiful girl of Guaza-coalco, daughter of a cacique, but sold by an inhuman mother to a slave-merchant, is exceedingly noble. When become the property of Cortez, to whom she had been presented by a cacique of Yucatan, she became the interpreter, the faithful adviser, and, to speak plainly, mistress of the conqueror. Dona Marina, always the companion of Cortez, was not solely engaged in interpreting his orders to the Mexicans. By means of that power of intuition which a woman who loves possesses in a much higher degree than any man, she frequently gave him salutary warnings. By means of her, Cortez ascertained who were the spies sent by XICOTENCATL to lull his vigilance, and her advice afterwards sent them back to their master with their hands amputated. By her means, also, in the sacerdotal and commercial city of Cholula, he discovered a conspiracy to exterminate at once the little band of Castilians. Marina had great influence on the natives; beautiful, says Comergo, the historian of TLASCALA, as a divinity, she seemed to the Mexicans something of a superior order to themselves. Her relation to Cortez, which no one was ignorant of, induced them to speak of her always next to him. Her real name was Malinche; Cortez was known only as Malintzin. The interview and reconciliation of Marina and her mother, who, by some strange casualty, chanced to be in the line of march of Cortez to Honduras, are an interesting page of history.

Should we wish to compare the *material* of the Iliad with that of the conquest, superiority will be found entirely on the side of the latter event. The *mêlée* of *la noche triste* has much more true grandeur than the assault of the defences of the Greeks. What is this defence compared with that in which the TLASCALANS fortified themselves against the AZTECS, or the entrenchments of Cortez during the siege? What is the attack of Hector on the vessels compared to the assaults of the quarters of Cortez, before his retreat, by the AZTECS? What comparison is there between the building of the wooden horse, and the construction of the thirteen vessels in the forests of Tlascala,* by the naval architect, Martin Lopez, and their transporta-

tion in pieces on the backs of men for twenty leagues to the banks of the lake, in which was the capital of Tenochtitlan?

The historian and poet are not called upon to imagine the marvelous, the intervention of Heaven in the conquest of Mexico. The actors of the conquest have rendered that trouble unnecessary. I have already said that among the companions of Cortez were men whose youth had been passed in war against the French in Italy, in naval contests with the Turks, who believed they saw the Apostle St. James fighting in their behalf on his white steed, and the Virgin Mary encouraging him. They saw this, says Bernal Diaz. Cortez himself was persuaded that his patron St. Peter assumed the arms and appearance of a TLASCALAN to save his life. To the Spaniards the Mexican divinities seemed personations of Satan, who unfolded against them sorceries, and to which Heaven replied, of course, by miracles. At the early part of the conquest, the cavaliers were supposed to be a separate class of physical beings; the man and horse were supposed components parts of one body. The fable of the Centaurs was renewed. The men seemed themselves divine, and we are told they were called the white gods. Certainly, the vague rumors from Yucatan of the arrival of those singular beings, and fair-haired and bearded men, were believed literally throughout the empire. The imagination drew evil auguries from their arrival. On his death-bed, NEZAHUALPILLI, King of TEZCUCO, learned in astrology, announced to Montezuma that the end of the empire was come. The gods to him appeared to be enraged. A blazing comet appeared. The waters of the lake swelled and overflowed the city without any preceding tempest or earthquake. A conflagration devastated the capital; loud and wailing voices were heard in the air, and the Princess PAPANTZIN, sister of the emperor, who had been four days dead, left her tomb, to announce to him coming calamity. What can be more strange and more likely to influence them than the tradition that the God QUETZALCOATL, he of the pale face and long beard, was about to return from the east to reclaim his empire, or else send his descendants in his stead? Does not this popular idea seemingly point expressly to the expedition of Cortez?

Among the motives which authorize poets to mingle in with earthly affairs, divine acts, and so to say, to give corporeality to their fictions, so as to induce the mass of men to believe them literally, we may especially mark two. One is the facility of accounting for otherwise inexplicable acts; the other, the concurrence of many accidents, among the number of which it is not forbidden to include genius, which offer solutions opposed to all probability, and which, in com-

mon parlance, we call the insolence of prosperity. This is what the skeptic attributes to chance ; but the mass of men and *religieux* (woe to the poet who is not religious!) to Providence. When religious facts present to us one or the other of these varieties of character, we have only to pass them through the mirror of fancy to see all that is wonderful in them. Now, from the very embarkation of Cortez to the taking of Mexico, all things are of this character. At every step we meet with an apparently insurmountable obstacle, which, however, was overcome by an almost incredible union of intelligence, daring and decision, or fortuitous chances contradicting every probability. The Spaniards at this era, but, let us do no injustice to the country of Vasco de Gama and Albuquerque, and say the inhabitants of the whole peninsula, were then the great nation in Europe, and Heaven itself seemed to assist them.

But I return to what I said in the beginning of this essay. The distinguishing character of the conquest was derived from its religious propagandism. In our days the love of glory and devotion to liberty excite men to great actions. The ruling passion of the Spaniards of that era was the advancement of the holy faith. They were, as it were, possessed of this idea. A motive powerful as this was required to produce, even in such a nature as Cortez, the achievements he performed. Those who say such heroism was inspired by avarice, are either ignorant of, or calumniate human nature. I have attempted to restore to the conquest its true character, and to attribute to Cortez and his companions their true motives. My object has been not merely to define the truth of an isolated historical event, but to recall to an age little prone to faith, what true religious zeal is capable of. It alone gives us the key to Mexican history down to the present time, and of the present condition of this vast empire. In it alone rests the secret of its rapid decay, and equally rapid *possible* regeneration. Cortez was one of those giants who gave such violent impulse to nations they interfere with, that centuries must pass before they can recover from the blow. His personal character is imprinted on the features of Mexico, even on institutions which arose after he had passed from the stage. This beautiful country is exclusively Catholic, and its inhabitants, thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Catholicism, have no prospects in advance separate from their faith. Persons who have sojourned among them and studied their nature, are doubtful whether they will retrocede into barbarity, or will undergo a new conquest by a Protestant race which promises to itself the empire of the world, and which is now inflamed by the possession of Texas: or whether they will remain free, and progress in the pathway of

civilization. We may believe from the rank occupied by Mexico in the New World, that, all the republics which were Spanish colonies will follow its destiny, whatever it may be. The question here, which a few years will suffice to solve for Mexico, and the resolution of which is of great import to the whole of the new continent, is more closely connected than is generally conceived with the vaster one; viz., whether the genius of Catholicism, when in close contact with that of Protestantism, can preserve its position, or whether in our times Catholicism can restore a healthy tone to a people struck with the languor of decay. Let us remember that France has a vaster interest than is generally conceived in this question, for it has ever been and still is the corypheus of Catholic nations; and from this fact derives its chiefest claim to greatness.

THE END.

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